

# WORLD OF DARKNESS GHOST HUNTERS



A Sourcebook for Wraith: The Oblivion 20th Anniversary Edition.



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MICHELLE BELANGER, BILL BODDEN, SARAH BOWMAN, MATTHEW DAWKINS,  
BRIAN LETENDRE, CATHERINE LUNDOFF, MATT M. MCELROY, HILARY SKLAR, LUCIEN SOULBAN,  
MIKE F. TOMASEK JR, MONICA VALENTINELLI

## Credits

**Written by:** Michelle Belanger, Bill Bodden, Sarah Bowman, Matthew Dawkins, Brian LeTendre, Catherine Lundoff, Matt M. McElroy, Hilary Sklar, Lucien Soulban, Mike F. Tomasek Jr, Monica Valentinelli

**Developed by:** Matthew Dawkins and Matt M. McElroy

**World of Darkness Line Developer:** Matthew Dawkins

**Creative Director:** Richard Thomas

**Editor:** Brian Johnson

**Art Director:** Michael Chaney

**Interior Art:** Michael Gaydos, Michele Giorgi, Niko Pope, Sam Denmark, Paul Lee

**Cover Art:** Paul Lee



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# A Cry in the Night

*By Catherine Lundoff*

"It doesn't look haunted," Bethany scowled, looking out the smudged car window of Al's junker at what passed for downtown Cobb's Center. It didn't even look that interesting, just stores and bars and houses, a lot like Lakeside, where they lived, only with less people on the streets. A lot less people. That might be interesting if she didn't think it was because there was nothing to do here.

"You always say that." Al scowled back, then made a face at her until she broke into a reluctant laugh.

"That's because I'm always right."

"Not this time. This time, I've got a feeling. Spectre Detectors are gonna score big, maybe get us our own cable show." He turned down the main street, then pulled into a convenience store parking lot and parked. "You want coffee?"

"Don't I always? Let me look at the map again just in case we need to ask for directions." Bethany pulled her phone out of her bag and squinted at the broken screen. Making it big by finding a real ghost would be a nice change, especially if it came with a cash payoff. She sighed loudly, then navigated to the website with the video on it.

This time, she muted the sound so they wouldn't hear the noise again. She shivered at the memory of the first time Al played the video. It had been pretty much the usual "kids running around the supposedly haunted woods with a handheld camera" setup until the woods started howling and screaming around them. Just remembering that made her want to cover her ears and hide...but she knew she was just being silly. It was staged or made up, just like all the other "hauntings" they'd been to, it had to be.

It sure looked fake if she just watched it without that horrible noise, and that made her feel better. The way the teens dropped their camera on the ground and turned it off suddenly after the noise started made it seem like more of a setup. Bethany rolled her eyes at the muted video and found the location she was looking for in the comments: the woods were out by Cobb's Center City Park, about a mile away. All they had to do was turn right off the main street a few blocks down and they were practically there.

"C'mon, Bethany! The truth is out there!" Al rapped his knuckles on her window, making her jump. Asshole. She rolled her eyes and climbed out of the car to trail after him across the parking lot.

"What is up with you, my Bethany? I sense that you are not feeling this ghost hunt. Are you burning out on me? Say it isn't so! You are my number one ghost hunting pal!" Al waved his long thin arms dramatically and dropped to one knee.

I'm your only ghost hunting pal. Bethany didn't say that out loud. And we gotta do something about that. She didn't say that out loud either. Instead, she went with, "It does feel like we've been doing this forever." She paused and sighed. "But that's not it. At least not right now. This time, it's different. I've got a weird feeling about these stupid woods."

"Because—" Al drew back dramatically as he swung the store door open, "the woods are filled with ghosts! Oooooo!"

She smacked his arm. "Not that kind of weird. Just off or something. Like a premonition." Al rolled his eyes, but didn't respond, and she grabbed the bathroom key from the counter and went to the back of the store to use the bathroom.



When she got back, she stopped to check out the candy bars while Al got them two coffees. She walked up to the counter just as Al told the clerk that they were headed for the woods by the park to "do some filming." One minute, the convenience store clerk was just like any other night clerk at a thousand different convenience stores: middle-aged, dark circles under her eyes, bored and sleepy. But when Al mentioned the woods, she woke up fast.

Eyes wide, expression frantic, she started yelling at them, "Are you kids nuts? There's something in those woods, something bad, and you don't want to be going anywhere near it!" She reached across the counter and grabbed Bethany's arm. "You got nothing to prove, little girl. You take your boyfriend home and don't worry about none of this filming nonsense. I don't want to see your faces up there!" She gestured at a bulletin board by the door. Words jumped out at Bethany: MISSING. Call if you have any information. Names. Photos.

There were at least five of them, all about the same age as Al and Bethany. One of them even looked like one of their classmates from high school, but Bethany didn't try to step any closer to confirm that. She could feel her arm start to shake in the woman's grip and tried to break free. "They didn't listen to me either and they haven't found any of them yet." The woman's voice dropped to a sinister whisper and Al blanched.

That was enough to give Bethany a moment of ferocious clarity and she yanked her arm free. "He's not my boyfriend! Stop trying to scare us!" She reached down and grabbed Al's hand, felt his fingers tremble in hers. "We know what we're doing. And we don't believe that there's anything out there. I bet those other people just left this town because they got bored, and you cooked up this crazy story about them going missing so it wouldn't drive off the tourists or something." She was breathing hard, and the more she felt Al shake, the madder she got. Who did this woman think she was?

The clerk stared at them, eyes narrowed, lips tight. "Fine. See if I care about you or your poor families. At least I tried to warn you. My conscience is clear." She glared at them as they backed slowly out of the store.

They got outside and ran to the car. Bethany let go of Al's hand as she threw her door open and he ran around the other side. They slammed the doors shut and stared at each other. "What now?" Al's voice still shook a little bit. "Crap. I forgot the coffees."

Bethany smacked the dashboard, then collapsed in her seat. "Dammit! I still don't want to do this, but now I want to show her. That had to be part of this whole setup! This stupid town must be in on it."

"Yep? I dunno, I think she really believed what she was saying. Which doesn't mean it's true. Somebody else might be tricking her into thinking the woods are dangerous." Al scowled and looked thoughtful. "What if there is somebody up in the woods, someone with something to hide?"

"You mean like, I dunno, drug dealers or serial killers or something?" This was sounding worse and worse by the minute. Maybe they could just tell people they went to the woods but didn't find anything. After all, the only people who knew they were here at all were Al's housemates and her sister. And her friend Anna. Then she glanced at the store where the clerk was still staring at them through the window and got angry all over again.

Al obviously felt the same way. He took a deep breath. "Let's go now, before I lose my nerve. It's 9 PM, so let's go out to the edge of the woods and set up the equipment and wait for a couple of hours. Nothing happens by then, we head home. If we hear anything weird and non-ghostly, we run. If we can't run, we turn off everything and hide until it stops, then we leave. Okay?" He looked over at her, his lips thin with determination.

Bethany grimaced. This was Al, after all. Her bestie forever, or at least since elementary school. She couldn't let him go into the woods alone. She just couldn't. Besides, they were prepared. Her phone was charged, they had flashlights, and if they had to they could outrun any drug dealers or other scumbags hanging out in the woods.

In the end, what mattered was that they stick together. Three years of running around deserted beaches and abandoned houses and they'd been just fine so far. This wasn't going to be any different. "Okay, let's do this."

He nodded and she shoved a CD into the car's player as they drove away from the store. The park was deserted when they got there, not a jogger or a dog walker in sight. Bethany's stomach twisted. What if that woman at the convenience store wasn't nuts? Her feeling of dread got worse as they found a parking lot near the bend in the river where the woods started and Al pulled in.

She looked around, hoping to see campers or boaters or anyone who looked even halfway normal. Not a soul in sight, but there was one small bright spot. "Look," Bethany pointed at a park sign. "We have to be out of here by 1 AM anyway." She hated how relieved she sounded, how glad she was that someone besides her was putting a firm time limit on this whole thing.

"Well, there we are then." Al sounded the way he always did when he was trying not to sound nervous. "Let's get this over with." They piled out of the car and popped the trunk. The Spectre Detector with its sensors and temperature gauge and records was there in all its homemade glory, not a wire out of place from the trip in, nothing to delay them or prevent them from lugging it into the woods with them.

Bethany looked at it and chewed her lower lip. Al tapped a couple of wires like he was hoping they were loose. But no such luck. They loaded it into the backpack. She grabbed the cameras and portable charger, then handed Al a water bottle and a flashlight. He picked up the pack and swung it onto his back with a grunt. "Ready?"



"I guess." She turned on her flashlight, grabbed her bag and walked with Al up to where the park ended and the woods began. They clambered awkwardly over the wooden fence that separated the two and found a narrow trail that wound off into the underbrush. The moon was up now and almost full, so they didn't really need their flashlights yet, but the trees looked thicker up ahead so they kept them ready.

Under the trees, the woods were utterly silent, apart from the sound of their breathing and their footsteps on the pine needles and brush. The noise from the video suddenly echoed around them, bouncing off the trees and lifting the hairs on the back of Bethany's neck. From the corner of her eye, she could see Al shiver and rub his bare arms. It had been a warm night when they left the park, but now there was a glacial chill all around them. Bethany thought she could see her breath in front of her. The noise faded as quickly as it had started, and the woods fell silent around them.

It was still cold, though. She tapped Al on the shoulder and he turned around so she could reach into the backpack. Bethany flipped on the Detector and it started with a low, high-pitched whine. Immediately, the temperature gauge went to its lower limit and the box shook. Bethany tried tweaking the settings, her fingers freezing on the metal dials. "Shit, Al. I don't know what's going on here." She gasped through chattering teeth and suddenly, as if her words had banished whatever it was, the chill disappeared.

"Well..." Al volunteered after a long pause. "That was weird."

Bethany didn't trust herself to respond. Instead, she pulled out one of the sensors from the backup and showed Al the recorded reading. The temperature had gone all the way down to freezing, then returned to normal just as suddenly. "If you've got any ideas..." she trailed off.

"One of those temperature inversion things? Giant refrigerator in the woods with the door open?" He looked up like he expected to see a freezer suspended over their heads.

Now that Bethany had warmed up, she was starting to tremble again. Every instinct told her that there was something nearby, something that felt old and predatory. Part of her screamed that they should run or at least hide. The hush in the woods now was so intense it was as if no night birds or animals lived anywhere in these woods.

Maybe they didn't. Maybe that's what the cold was: the ghosts of a hundred owls and robins and whatever else used to live here. Al took off the pack and started fiddling with settings while Bethany watched the trees around them. For a moment, she almost thought she saw a face, pale and white and glowing under the moon, peering down at them from the treetops, but it disappeared at her strangled cry. Al jumped and looked up at the branches, then back at Bethany. They both let out nervous giggles.

The quiet that descended after they stopped was even worse than before, if that were possible. Then, just like that,

the cold was back, covering them like a blanket and seeping into their skin. Al pulled Bethany close to him in an involuntary gesture and they huddled together, looking around them with fingers too frozen to work their equipment. This time, the cold came with bursts of air, yanking Bethany's hair loose from its ponytail and making the straps on the backpack snap.

Something was watching them. Bethany could feel it now, and she squinted into the wind, trying to see whatever or whoever it was. Something howled long and low and otherworldly, then switched octaves to the sound they had heard on the video. It was somewhere between a howl and a shriek, and both of them clapped their hands over their ears in a futile effort to shut it out.

The wind picked up, knocking them to their knees with an icy breath, and Al tore one hand loose from his ear to flip the switches on the monitors. The camera kicked in as well, just in time to pick up the sound. He smacked his free hand over his ear again and Bethany could feel his body tremble as they huddled together.

She tried hard not to scream, tried to think of bunnies and kittens or work or whatever would help her check out of this and stay sane. Instead, her mind kept returning to the video. What had happened to those people after their camera went dark? Bethany really, really didn't want to find out. Al's low groan cut across her thoughts and she swiveled sideways to look at him, hands still clamped over her ears.

He convulsed, only the whites of his eyes showing, and she grabbed at his shoulders, trying to hold him still. "Al! Al! What's the matter?" He twitched under her hands and the noise intensified for a long moment, the woods shaking with unearthly wails. Bethany screamed, covering her ears again as Al suddenly floated upward, eyes still rolled back in his head. His body went rigid and he rose to about two feet off the forest floor. Bethany stared at him open-mouthed, frozen in cold and terror.

It was only when a white fog rose from the ground and started to move him forward into the trees that she snapped back to a version of reality where she controlled her body. Jumping to her feet, she scrambled after Al, trying to catch him. The fog struck her like a hand between her shoulders, knocking her back down to the ground. She tried rolling away, but it reached out and wrapped around her like a sleeping bag. Then it rolled up and covered her face until she couldn't see the trees anymore.

She flailed, punching and kicking out at the cloud of white that enveloped her, trying to see where they, whoever they were, had taken Al. Rolling and flailing, she dropped down into a hollow patch in the forest floor, and the fog lifted a little so that she could see out again. Not that it did her much good, but at least she could see that the mist, fog, whatever it was, filled the forest around her now.

Then she saw the dim, pale shapes moving around between the trees, hovering above her, rising from the ground



like mist. Once she saw them, they saw her too. With a screech, a pale, bony face with eyes that were great black pits and a mouth that opened into something endless and horrible shot up into hers. It made a sound like laughter when she screamed and struggled, trying to break free of the fog. It swung off into the mist, then another and another creature like it appeared. She could see an ornate knife in one skeletal hand, something that might have been a gun in another.

She screamed with everything she had in her. Al was out of sight in the mist and she could barely move, but she kicked and flailed and did her best to break free. The howling slowly died away but the fog stayed on, holding her, trapping her. The skeletal figures vanished into the mist, following Al, and she screamed and cursed at them, threatening them as they faded. Her brain kept rejecting what her eyes were seeing. This wasn't happening, it was a hallucination or some kind of setup. If she just repeated that enough times, maybe it would be true.

From deep in the woods, she thought she heard an answering scream, then from much further away, sirens. The wind spun her around, lifting her off the ground and she flailed wildly, trying to catch hold of a tree to brace herself, to stop them from dragging her away to some netherworld or worse. A wave of icy cold struck her, and an instant later something else was looking out of her eyes.

Bethany could feel herself pushed aside in her own mind by something ancient and powerful. The fog bonds that immobilized her vanished but she was trapped in her own body now. Whatever it was that rode her opened her mouth in a screaming laugh. Then she found herself standing up and running after Al and the ghostly figures that followed him. She willed her legs to stop, willed her feet to stumble, willed herself to blunder into a tree, anything to slow down, to get herself back.

None of it worked. She could see Al through the fog now, still floating above the ground. He was stationary in a clearing in the trees, and the two figures she had seen earlier were drifting around him, as if waiting for something. Whatever was in her head felt like it was eager, anticipating something that was going to happen. All of a sudden, the forest turned red, as if covered with blood. It oozed down the trunks and up from the ground. The sky began to rain red, soaking the world around her.

Bethany, squashed into a corner of her own mind, could feel the thing inside her mock her, even without words or coherent thoughts. She was still fighting it when everything went red again, this time clouding her vision. The sound was back, and her head was full of it and red, so much red. She had no idea where she was or where Al was or if they'd make it out of here. With what few shreds of sanity she had left, she vowed that she would never do this again, that this time she would quit, no matter what Al said.

That last bit of her awareness drowned in a sea of otherworldly cold and red and noise. She didn't see the misty figure press a spectral dagger into her cold hand, didn't feel it turn solid. Didn't feel her arm go up in the air or be guided down by icy, foggy hands. Didn't see the look in Al's eyes when they released him, just before the blade sank in.

Bethany had nothing to say when the police found them afterwards, following up on a tip from the convenience store clerk. She was crouched next to Al in the woods, rocking back and forth on her heels, the bloody knife a few steps away. She didn't resist being restrained or tested for alcohol, didn't respond to any of their questions or object to getting loaded into the back of their car. It was only when the ambulance stopped nearby and the paramedics came to pick up Al's body that she seemed to come to life. She threw herself at the door as it closed, screaming, "He's still out there! Why are you leaving him?"

The door closed and the only sound she heard was the howl from the video. But now it sounded like laughter.

• • •

It was a very different Bethany who appeared at the convenience store in Cobb's Center six months later. Her brown hair was cropped short and her eyes behind her glasses were still wide from the drugs they'd given her at the psych ward. She was thinner, and up until yesterday she'd had a tremor. But her hands had stopped shaking today. They were steady enough to help her escape, help her find the Spectre Detector in Al's garage. His roommates had packed it away, maybe keeping it as a memento.

She made some adjustments to it before shoving it into the pack. She didn't go into the house to ask about it or anything else. After all, they thought she'd killed Al; they'd never help her. But one of his roommates still kept a spare car key hidden under the floor mat in the back of his car. She took the car and the pack with the Detector in it. There was an old jacket in the back of the car and she put that on as she drove down the snow-covered road.

The same clerk was working that night, and her eyes got wide when she saw Bethany walk in. There were more faces, more names, on the board, but Bethany didn't waste her time looking at them. They didn't matter; Al was still out there, though, picture or no picture. She knew it, bone deep. She couldn't have really killed him; those things had just messed with her mind.

So she was going to rescue him tonight, whatever it took. She was done with nightmares about howling and mist, blood and terror. Here, standing in front of her, and cringing away from her, was the answer to how she was going to do it. "I know you know what's out there. You called the cops because you knew what kind of danger we were in."

The clerk shook her head as if her tongue were frozen. Her fingers shook a little as she played with a religious me-



dallion on the chain around her neck. They stared at each other until the clerk choked out, "You shouldn't have come back here. You were...the only one who got away. Get out of here, go!" She raised a trembling hand and pointed toward the door.

Bethany squinted at her. "You're coming with me. I can't do this by myself. We have to do it tonight, before they... look for me here." The clerk shook her head, reaching behind the counter for an alarm or a weapon, Bethany didn't know which. She lunged across the counter and grabbed the woman's arm. "How long are you planning on just putting up flyers, knowing what you know?"

Leaning in this close, she noticed the woman's nametag. "Ellen. You don't want those things to go on doing what they're doing, do you? Gives you nightmares, too, doesn't it?"

"You're nuts," Ellen's voice trembled. "Why do you want to go back?"

"Because I know Al's still out in those woods, and I'm going to bring him back. Now, are you going to let whatever's out there kill me this time?" The clerk closed her eyes and clenched her necklace tighter with whitening fingers. Bethany crooned, her voice turning singsong, "You believe that they're real." She gestured her free hand at the posters. "We didn't. They didn't. But you do, and that's how we're going to save him. I can fight what's real. You make them real, I'll do the rest."

Ellen drew in a long and shuddering breath, then exhaled and opened her eyes. She stared deep into Bethany's dilated pupils, then went limp and nodded. A few minutes later, they were in the car, a sign saying "Closed for Family Emergency" on the door of the darkened convenience store behind them. Bethany murmured, "There is something out there. There is. I'm coming for you, Al," like a prayer as they drove through the quiet town toward the dark woods.







# Introduction

A house is never still in darkness to those who listen intently; there is a whispering in distant chambers, an unearthly hand presses the snib of the window, the latch rises. Ghosts were created when the first man woke in the night.

– J.M. Barrie, *The Little Minister* (1891)

In the World of Darkness, a mortal's first brush with the supernatural may be real – or it may be a trick of the mind. While many may not believe creatures like vampires or werewolves exist, most are willing to entertain the idea that ghosts *do*. Whether someone is convinced their lover is haunting them from beyond the grave, or they're certain tragic, if not violent, deaths cause ghosts to appear, mortals assume there is an afterlife and spirits are real. Mortals are so determined to prove ghosts are real, that they often go to great lengths to investigate the supernatural, whether they believe in it or not.

**World of Darkness: Ghost Hunters** presents paranormal investigation from a mortal's perspective. Chapters cover skeptical ghost hunters, well-organized groups, natural mediums, and their families along with the equipment they use to uncover the “truth” that ghosts are real. In the World of Darkness, however, paranormal investigators may unwittingly stumble across any one of its other denizens, putting themselves (and the creatures they encounter) at risk.

Whether they're the protagonists of a chronicle or the antagonists pursuing a wraith or one of the Kindred, ghost hunters introduce a new way to tell compelling stories using the 20th Anniversary World of Darkness games.

## Theme and Mood

The prominent themes in **World of Darkness: Ghost Hunters** are *mystery* and *fear of the unknown*. Ghost hunters explore the supernatural and investigate the darkest, often oldest corners of the world, even when other mortals are too scared to linger in the shadows. A paranormal investigator doesn't have to be skilled or an expert in the occult to hunt, nor do they have to believe the things that go bump in the night are real.

For this reason, the secondary theme of a chronicle incorporating ghost hunters is a spine-chilling fear of the unknown – for both mortals and the denizens of the supernatural they unwittingly target. Whilst a vampire is more than capable of defending themselves against a ghost hunter whose “weapon” is an EVP recorder, many paranormal investigators are organized into groups that are well-equipped and have plenty of resources to mount a bigger inquiry. A mildly curious investigator, on the other hand, who had a suspicion the supernatural was real, will face their greatest fears when their first brush is not what they expected it to be.

The mood is tied to the role of the paranormal investigator in a chronicle. As protagonists, mortals are often totally unaware of what they're getting themselves into. What starts



out as a spooky evening at a haunted house quickly turns to *dread* when a skeptic cannot deny the things they've seen and believed. Even paranormal investigators who do believe in the supernatural will not know the full extent of their ignorance until they encounter a wraith who's eager to toy with them.

When ghost hunters and their organizations are antagonists, the mood shifts for the supernatural. While mortals may not cause outright terror, they will force different creatures to feel *vulnerable* at the possibility that they, and their secrets, may be fully exposed. That potential puts supernatural beings and their societies at risk in different ways.

## What's in this Book?

This book covers a variety of paranormal investigators in the World of Darkness who are eager to unlock the secrets of the supernatural. Chapters cover types of investigations, ghost hunting equipment such as infrared cameras and EVP recorders, and methods of research, along with mediums and ghost hunting organizations.

- **Chapter One: The Origins of Ghost Hunting** shows modern ghost hunting in the World of Darkness through a series of in-character journal entries, e-mails, and news articles detailing its history and rise in popularity. This chapter reveals how the explosion of paranormal investigators has been both a blessing and a curse to "serious" ghost hunters.
- **Chapter Two: Tools, Tactics, and Troubles** covers the methodology and common practices of paranormal investigators. This chapter then talks about how ghost hunters find cases, how they recruit new members, and how they set up shop when investigating a possible haunting or other sighting.
- **Chapter Three: Ghost-Hunting Organizations** introduces a variety of organizations that hunt ghosts, search for haunted artifacts, and are obsessed with lore. Groups like the Orphic Circle and the Chamber of Corvi reveal their modus operandi, how they recruit or hire outside investigators, and whether those organizations are fronts for something much darker.
- **Chapter Four: Mediums** highlights the existence of mediums, both real and fake, while covering how they intersect with ghost hunting. This chapter introduces types of mediums within different occult traditions, and families who've inherited such abilities over generations.
- **Chapter Five: Character Creation** details how to create mortal player characters to investigate the paranormal. It introduces new Merits & Flaws, new Backgrounds, Numina, and equipment that'll help them discover and deal with ghosts.
- **Chapter Six: Case Files** comprises a series of in-character journal entries by one ghost hunter, documenting police reports, newspaper clippings, and e-mails detailing possible

haunted houses, monster sightings, and unexplained murders and/or disappearances.

- **Chapter Seven: Storytelling** ties the book together by showing how paranormal investigators can be introduced as player characters or as antagonists in a **20th Anniversary World of Darkness** chronicle. Storytellers will find this chapter loaded with advice on how to introduce this aspect into an existing game or launch a new chronicle.
- **Appendix: Ghosts and the Undead** provides a set of generalized rules for ghosts that can be used in place of Storyteller rules found in **20th Anniversary** game lines such as *Wraith: The Oblivion* or *Vampire: The Masquerade*.

## Roles

A World of Darkness chronicle that features mortal characters takes a certain level of finesse to manage, because their involvement offers a different look into the world of the supernatural for both Storytellers and players.

### The Storyteller

A *Wraith: The Oblivion*, *Changeling: The Dreaming*, *Vampire: The Masquerade*, *Mage: The Ascension*, or *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* chronicle is run with the understanding that all characters not only believe the paranormal is real, but are themselves proof of its existence. What other supernatural creatures take for granted, however, mortals can only guess at. As such, the Storyteller must decide how ghost hunters might enhance their chronicles. When ghost hunters are introduced as antagonists, the veil between the real world and that of the supernatural thins. When they're the protagonists, the characters are facing immeasurable threats because they're surrounded by the dark — and it threatens to engulf them if they're not careful.

### The Player

Players have multiple options for gameplay. In **World of Darkness: Ghost Hunters**, players may create a character fixated on ghosts. Their protagonist could be a medium, a skeptic, an entertainer, a dedicated paranormal investigator, etc. Should the player want to explore what it means to be a mortal in the World of Darkness, they can expect intrigue, misdirection, and danger unlike anything they've experienced before. Unlocking secrets for the sake of exploring intrigue isn't enough to sustain the character's role in a chronicle, however: determine why hunting ghosts is important to them for a more satisfying experience.

## Lexicon

Mortals typically do not share the same depth and breadth of knowledge the denizens of the supernatural do. As such, their understanding is limited and, often, paranormal investigators not only misinterpret their experiences, but are likely to mislabel a ghost as a spirit or a vampire as a ghoul. Appropriate



terms for use with **World of Darkness: Ghost Hunters** can be drawn from multiple **20th Anniversary World of Darkness** games that may be represented in a chronicle, with the caveat that a mortal may not use the same vocabulary.

Paranormal investigators will focus on hunting ghosts. The terms that affect them the most are drawn from the **20th Anniversary Edition of Wraith: The Oblivion** and from their own personalized beliefs.

**Body Snatcher:** A wraith who possesses the living.

**Caul, The:** The amniotic sac of a wraith's birth into the Shadowlands. The translucent covering made of ectoplasm into which all wraiths are reborn.

**Corpus:** The physical "body" of the wraith.

**Doomsday:** The end of the world. Most wraiths think it means the day Oblivion swallows everything, but any number of Heretic cults would beg to differ.

**Doomshade:** A term for a Spectre, generally used by older wraiths and mocked by younger ones.

**Doomslayer:** A wraith who specializes in hunting Spectres.

**Fetters:** Those things that remain in the lands of the living that tie a wraith to her old life.

**Gauntlet, The:** Another term wraiths use to describe the Shroud.

**Ghost:** The de facto term mortals use to describe invisible, supernatural entities. Investigators assume ghosts represent the disembodied souls of humans who have died.

**Haunt:** A place where the Restless make themselves at home and the Shroud is thin. Mortals also use this term, but can only guess why that specific place is occupied by ghosts.

**Oblivion:** The corrupting hunger of entropy to devour all things.

**Penumbra:** A spirit realm tied to the material, separated by the Gauntlet. The Shadowlands is one type of Penumbra.

**Plasm:** The physical matter of the Underworld. Mortals refer to it as ectoplasm and suspect it's a substance that ghosts emit; they don't realize that wraiths are made of one form of plasm or another.

**Poltergeist:** A term mortals use to describe a ghost, often invisible, that moves objects with telekinesis.

**Restless, The:** A different name for wraiths.

**Shadow, The:** The self-absorbed, self-destructive, sentient side of a wraith's personality bent on eventually dragging him down to Oblivion.

**Shadowlands, The:** A term wraiths use to describe the realm of ghosts just beyond the Shroud.

**Shroud, The:** The barrier that separates the Shadowlands and the Skinlands.

**Skinlands, The:** A term ghosts use to describe the plane of existence where mortals live.

**Spectre:** A wraith who has given in to Oblivion. Their Shadow is now dominant, and they work to serve Oblivion's goals. Also known as Shadow-Eaten.

**Spirit:** A term some mortals use interchangeably with ghost. Some also use the term to describe other invisible forces, benevolent or malign.

## Source Material

Ghost stories and spooky tales provide great inspiration for a **World of Darkness: Ghost Hunters** chronicle. Additionally, plots that revolve around a team of paranormal investigators are great fodder for building a framework, too.

### RECOMMENDED READING:

#### Games

*Delta Green* — Arc Dream Publishing

*Esoterrorists* — Pelgrane Press Ltd

*Ghosts of Albion* — Eden Studios, Inc.

*InSpectres* — Memento Mori Theatrics

#### Books (Non-Fiction)

*The Ghost Hunter's Handbook* — Lori Summers

*The Ghost Hunter's Survival Guide* — Michelle Belanger

*Paranormal Investigations: The Proper Procedures and Protocols of Investigation for the Beginner to the Pro* — Chad Stambaugh

#### Books (Fiction)

The Dresden Files series — Jim Butcher

*Ghosts and Grisly Things* — Ramsey Campbell

The Greywalker series — Kat Richardson

*The Haunting of Hill House* — Shirley Jackson

The Raven Cycle series — Maggie Stiefvater

*The Shining* — Stephen King

*Supernatural: John Winchester's Journal* — Alex Irvine

*The Woman in Black* — Susan Hill

### RECOMMENDED VIEWING:

#### TV/Film

*The Awakening*

*The Conjuring*

*Frighteners*

*Ghostbusters*

*Ghost Hunters International*

*Grave Encounters*

*The Grudge*

*The Others*

*Stir of Echoes*

*Supernatural*

*Thirteen Ghosts*

*White Noise*

*X-Files*







# The Origins of Ghost Hunting

They say that shadows of deceased ghosts  
Do haunt the houses and the graves about,  
Of such whose life's lamp went untimely out,  
Delighting still in their forsaken hosts.  
— Joshua Sylvester, English poet (1563-1618)

## Eternal Questions

What happens when we die? That question is so inextricably tied to our own existence that humanity has striven to answer it for thousands of years. Whether through science, religion or other mystical means, we've tried to assure ourselves that physical death is not the end for us — it's the beginning. From 30,000-year-old cave paintings in the south of France to countless religions and belief systems, the notion that there is some form of afterlife is extremely prevalent. And if you're reading this book, you most likely are one who believes that death is not the end for us. That once a human being sheds their physical body, they continue to exist in another form.

Some believe this form is the soul, the essence of who we are. Others believe that we are all made of energy, and that when we die we're merely returning to our natural state. We know from a scientific perspective that energy itself cannot die — it merely changes form. These new forms pass on to some other place, leaving the world as we know it behind. Heaven, Hell, the Afterlife, the Underworld, a parallel uni-

verse — whatever we call it, it seems that the form we take on after physical death moves on to somewhere else.

But not always.

Sometimes, our new forms get stuck. They don't move on. Sometimes, they become ghosts. Or spirits, or whatever you want to call them: the soul or essence of a human being that maintains a connection — or tether — to this physical world for some reason (or maybe even for some person).

For the purposes of *The Paranoid Paranormist*, we're going to use the terms "spirit" and "ghost" pretty interchangeably. That's not to say there aren't different types of ghosts, as they come in a variety of flavors, but we'll talk more about that later. Because this is a book about hunting ghosts — about hunting for answers. Making a connection with something from the other side, finding out why it's here, and what it wants. Maybe even helping it (or making it) move on to wherever ghosts go when they leave this world.

But in order to appreciate where we've come to in terms of modern ghost hunting, we've first got to take a trip in the wayback machine.



Stuart Combs

Combs & Gordon, LLC

1428 Wesley Street

Haverhill, MA 01835

RE: CATCHING DEATH: TRUE STORIES OF A GHOST HUNTER

Stu,

First off, sorry for the hard mail. I've been in the woods of Northern Maine for the past three and a half weeks, on a case with a hunter out of Portland. Let's just say it hasn't been tech-friendly. By the time you get this, I'll be in Nova Scotia. There's an old shipyard in Yarmouth that was a major haunt site years ago. It's been dormant since 1997, but recently a ton of activity's been reported there. The hunter I'm with is meeting a few of his contacts to check it out, and I'm tagging along.

Look — I know you were expecting a full manuscript a month ago, and I know you've been keeping the publisher at bay. And I have been writing, whenever I can. I've enclosed some bits and pieces of the core chapters — some history, interview transcripts and a few notable personalities and organizations. There are some research materials here as well, mostly news clippings and journal articles on stuff I want to dig deeper into.

It may not look like much yet, but trust me, it will be — I just need a little more time.

I'm onto something big here, Stu. Every hunter I've embedded with is talking about it — mostly with other hunters, but I've pieced enough together from the times when they forget I'm there or think I can't hear them. Something big is happening. All this increased activity — all these restless spirits — it's building to something. From what I've heard, no one knows exactly what yet. But there are some interesting theories, and they'll make for great reading.

I'll be in touch with more soon.

—Betsy Chambers

P.S. As you'll see, a couple of the interviews I transcribed are from a podcast called THE PARANOID PARANORMIST. Search it out and listen to the episodes the interviews are from, as well as the one about the rise in paranormal activity over the past several years. I'm trying to get an interview with the host of the show as well. He knows something, Stu.

P.P.S. I know you think I'm out of my mind, but I swear to God that I've been feeling Alison's presence since I started working on this book. I think she's trying to tell me something.



# Rise of Modern Spiritualism

For as long as mankind has believed there are greater powers than us out there, we have sought to communicate with them. Oracles, augurs, diviners, interpreting messages from the gods and gleaning insight into future events. Our search for answers to death's mysteries is no different. We want to know what awaits us on the other side. And as long as there have been questions, there have been those who claim to have the answers — or at least the ability to get them.

The idea there are members of the living that can communicate with the dead has existed for thousands of years. Even the Old Testament has references to mediumship — in the book of Samuel, King Saul visits the Witch of Endor to have her contact the spirit of the deceased Samuel in order to obtain guidance regarding an upcoming battle.

But it was during the mid-1800s that spiritualism as a movement became more mainstream, particularly in the US and Europe. Spiritualism holds that not only is it possible to connect with spirits, but that spirits can in fact communicate with and provide information to the living.

In those days, it wasn't uncommon for a posh dinner party to end in a séance. And the prevalence of mediums meant that anyone who wanted to communicate with the deceased didn't have to look far to find someone who could allegedly make that happen. Whether trying to reach a loved one who passed on, or searching for the current reincarnation of an ancestor, it was all possible — for a price.

## Charlatans and Frauds

Spiritualism had surged in popularity, but like the snake oil and elixir salesmen of the time, many mediums were in fact frauds. Unlike the elixir scandals though, spiritualism didn't have a regulatory body like the Food and Drug Administration that would eventually clean it up. This is likely one of the reasons that many of the earliest paranormal investigators spent a great deal of time exposing frauds and debunking hoaxes. Many of the psychical and paranormal organizations that began to appear in the mid-1800s focused as much on debunking scams as they did on finding real evidence of ghosts.

This trend continues today. One of the main reasons ghost hunting is still looked at with a healthy dose of skepticism is that it deserves to be. Its history is littered with con artists, and even today there's a good chance the person you hired to find out what's lurking in the attic is actually scamming you. That makes it even tougher for legitimate psychics and mediums to be taken seriously.

## The Fox Sisters

The Fox sisters are often credited as the founders of modern spiritualism. Their path to stardom began when sisters Kate (age fifteen) and Margaret (eleven) claimed to be able to communicate with a spirit that had been causing strange noises in their Hydesville, New York home. The girls would ask the spirit questions, and it would respond with a series of knocking noises. When friends and neighbors bore witness to the girls' ghostly communications, word of their abilities spread. Their older sister Leah began managing them, and the Fox sisters went on to become well-known mediums.

Kate and Margaret enjoyed great success for years, despite several studies that claimed they were frauds. The prevailing theory was that the girls were clicking the joints of their feet to cause the loud noises attributed to the spirits. Nevertheless, the momentum of spiritualism could not be stopped, and mediums were popping up everywhere, claiming to have abilities of their own.

When Margaret was in her early fifties, she made a public appearance in which she admitted she and her sister had been perpetrating a hoax the entire time. She stated that they were in fact using the bones of their feet to create the noises of the communicating spirits. Many followers of the spiritualist movement refused to believe the confession, and Maggie herself later recanted it, but the damage to their credibility was already done, and they faded into obscurity.

## Davenport Brothers

A few years after the Fox Sisters thrust spiritualism into the mainstream, a couple of brothers from Buffalo, New York threw their hat into the paranormal ring. The brothers became well known for introducing the "spirit cabinet" into the spiritualism movement. The spirit cabinet was a large rectangular box that would rest upon wooden sawhorses, to enable the audience to see beneath it. The two brothers were tied up and shut inside the cabinet with musical instruments and other objects placed between them. Once the cabinet was closed, the spirits would supposedly manifest and the instruments would begin to sound off. The cabinet would be opened again to reveal both brothers still in bonds, the implication being that it was the manifested spirits who were communicating through the instruments.

Like the Fox sisters, the Davenports were challenged and seemingly debunked on several occasions, but that didn't stop a variety of other spiritualist and magician acts from copying the spirit cabinet act.



## Interview Transcript: The Paranoid Paranormist, Episode #43

**CF:** Gather round, skeptics and believers alike, 'cause it's time for another episode of the *Paranoid Paranormist*. I'm your host Craig Freeling, and today I'm joined by Doctor Avery Quinn, professor of biophysics at Providence University and member of the New England Parapsychological Association.

**AQ:** Thanks for having me today, Craig.

**CF:** So, Doctor Quinn, we're talking about fraud, hoaxes and con artistry in the field of paranormal study. And as someone who's studied the history of the field and is currently an active participant, I have to ask – why do you think that fraud is still so prevalent in the ghost hunting community to this day?

**AQ:** Well Craig, I think there are a few primary reasons for that. For starters, most people who look to contact a paranormal investigator already believe something otherworldly is going on. Most people want to believe, if not in ghosts, then at the very least that there is existence after death. So, much like anything else that involves belief, there is an opportunity for the unscrupulous to take advantage.

**CF:** Plus, we all want to feel validated, right? To know that those feelings we had are because of something real?

**AQ:** Totally. Look at the Forer effect. This is why cold reading works so well on people. Forer was a psychologist that gave his students what he told them were individual personality sketches – profiles he'd put together on each of them. He asked his students to rate how close he came with the profiles he'd created, and the students gave him consistently high ratings. He then revealed to them that they'd all received the same exact statements about their personalities.

**CF:** So in cold reading, where the reader gets a group of people together–

**AQ:** He or she spouts a bunch of general information and vague statements that are bound to resonate with someone in the room. Once the reader has a hook, he or she then takes cues from the subject's body language, speech, dress and a variety of other factors to help build that person's narrative.

**CF:** And the subject does the rest by filling in the blanks, because they want to believe that a loved one is speaking to them from beyond the grave.

**AQ:** Then there's the tech factor. The technology for conducting investigations has advanced over the years, and so have the means by which to fool unsuspecting – or even suspecting – people. People can create movie-quality special effects on their home computers now. And what some people can do with photo manipulation is nothing short of amazing. Hell, one of the biggest creative software companies in the world is about to release a tool that will allow people to manipulate people's voices as easily as you can photos.

**CF:** So, you're saying fishing line and dust particles are the least of our worries?

**AQ:** (Laughs) Yes, well, it will certainly give people even more reason to be skeptical of audio and visual records, that's for sure. But that's not the biggest factor in the fraud we see today.



**CF:** So what is, then?

**AQ:** The popularity of paranormal investigations in all types of media – books, TV, the web – it means there is fame to be had if you can make a name for yourself. And what's the easiest way to make a name for yourself?

**CF:** By finding evidence of paranormal activity?

**AQ:** Bingo. People don't watch ghost hunting shows to see hauntings get debunked. Kind of puts a lot of pressure on the people behind those shows to have something happen, right? So, even if these investigators and the show runners start out with good intentions, at some point they have to make something happen.

## Paranormal Investigators Past and Present

Stories and records of paranormal incidents and investigations go back millennia. Almost two thousand years ago, Pliny the Younger wrote about Athenodorus and the ghost that he helped move on by finding his bones and giving him a proper burial. In the 1500s, famous astrologer and philosopher John Dee was employing crystal-gazing in his attempts to communicate with spirits and angels.

But as spiritualism was becoming an international movement in the mid-1800s, individuals and organizations set forth to study the paranormal from a more academic and scientific perspective. While most of these organizations were aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of psychic and paranormal events, an argument could be made that this is where modern ghost hunting truly began.

The following timeline highlights some of the notable paranormal investigators and organizations that have contributed to the field over the past century and a half, as well as some of their more notable contributions.

**1848** Catherine Crow's book *The Night Side of Nature* was an examination of alleged hauntings and paranormal events in England. Through it, she hoped to inspire further investigation and examination of the paranormal by the larger scientific community.

**1862** The Ghost Club formed in London to investigate and research paranormal and psychic phenomena, with a heavy focus on ghosts and hauntings. Today it's believed to be the oldest organization of its kind. Charles Dickens, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, W.B. Yeats and Harry Price were each members at some point over the years.

**1882** The Society for Psychical Research was formed in London to investigate paranormal and spiritualist phenomena from a scientific perspective. They

studied everything from hypnotism to hauntings. Still active today, the SPR bills itself as the first organization of its kind.

**1885** The American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) was created. Dream research, near-death experiences and clairvoyance were among the many topics the group studied, and their work continues today.

**1919** Charles Fort's *The Book of the Damned* compiled information from his studies of occult phenomena and events for which science had no explanations.

**1924** Harry Houdini, the world's greatest escape artist, wrote *A Magician Among The Spirits*. The book detailed his debunking of several mediums and spiritualists, including the Davenport Brothers.

**1936** British paranormal investigator Harry Price released the book *Confessions of a Ghost Hunter*, in which he discusses cases he investigated and the methods he used in doing so.

**1937** Harry Price spent a year in the Borley Rectory, reputed to be the most haunted house in all of England. Four years later he released a book about the experience.

**1952** Ed and Lorraine Warren created the New England Society for Psychic Research (NESPR) with the goal of investigating hauntings. For over five decades, they investigated thousands of paranormal events through the lenses of both science and religion. Famous cases included the Amityville Horror, the Perron family haunting, and the Annabelle case, involving a possessed doll.

**1963** Hans Holzer, sometimes referred to as the "King of Paranormal Investigators," released the book *Ghost Hunter*. Many of the more notable cases he had investigated up to that point were detailed in the book.



Holzer wrote well over one hundred books on ghosts and hauntings overall. Like the Warrens, he also investigated the Amityville Horror case in the seventies.

**1969** The Five-College Mystery Club formed in Massachusetts. A group of students from colleges in the Amherst area, they were well known in the region for debunking paranormal aspects of criminal events. Some accused them of meddling in police affairs, but their work resulted in dozens of arrests over the years.

**1973** Andrew Green, also known as “The Spectre Inspector,” published *Ghost Hunting: A Practical Guide*, which described his scientific approach to ghost hunting.

**1975** Raymond Moody, known for his research into the afterlife and near-death experiences (a term he coined), wrote the book *Life After Life*. His later work has also involved spirit communication.

**1978** Parapsychologist and ghost hunter Peter Underwood released *The Dictionary of the Supernatural*. Underwood investigated the paranormal for seven decades and wrote more than fifty books about his experiences. He was considered one of Britain’s foremost experts on hauntings, and was referred to by some as the “King of the Ghost Hunters.”

**1982** British parapsychologist Tony Cornell (along with Howard Wilkinson and Alan Gauld) created what would become known as the SPIDER (Spontaneous Psychophysical Incident Data Electronic Recorder), a device that monitored and recorded physical changes in a given space.

**1984** Three parapsychologists from Columbia University started their own ghost hunting and removal business called the Phantom Nabbers after a rash of reported paranormal events in Manhattan. The group immediately gained popularity and had to take on a fourth member to keep up with the influx of requests for their services. Phantom Nabbers ceased operations in late 1989 and were not heard from again until 2016, when Phantom Nabbers reopened business under new management.

**1993** FBI Agents within the Special Affairs Division began working together in a unit that investigated alleged paranormal events. They were active in the field for over nine years, but then fell off the ghost hunting map for more than a decade. Recently, rumors of their return began circulating. Over the years they have been linked to Orpheus, but that is more conjecture than fact.

**1996** Two years after its formation, the Orpheus Group first offered its services to the public. A privately-funded organization that employs individuals with paranormal abilities to investigate and deal with hauntings and other ghost-related issues, their “agents” can allegedly project themselves into the spirit world to communicate directly with ghosts (or “post-life entities” as they refer to them). The Orpheus Group also purports to help spirits “move on” as well, though what methods they employ to do so are a mystery.

**2004** The Interstate Paranormal Society was given a reality television series by the Science Fiction Network. The weekly show followed TIPS investigations into allegedly haunted sites, and became a huge hit for the network, spawning spinoffs and creating a wave of mainstream interest about ghost hunting that is largely responsible for the surge of paranormal investigators over the past decade.

**2006** Well-known ghost and demon hunter Jacob Whesker was killed in a car accident, sending shockwaves through the paranormal community. His sons Sean and Dylan would continue their father’s legacy and began making a name for themselves as paranormal investigators. Stories of their exploits across the country have become legendary over the past decade, though some in the community believe they are giving paranormal investigators a bad name.

## Science or Pseudoscience?

By and large, ghost hunting and paranormal investigations in general are looked upon as pseudoscientific at best, despite attempts at legitimacy in the scientific community over the years. One of the things you’ll hear a lot of ghost hunters claim is that they take a “scientific approach” to paranormal investigation.

But what does that mean, really? Because there is no scientific evidence that ghosts really exist, and no scientific evidence that any of the equipment used in ghost hunting can actually detect ghosts. Still, elements of the scientific method can be followed by paranormal investigators: recording observations, forming hypotheses and testing them, and drawing conclusions from the data obtained.

A big mistake — especially for amateur investigators — is going into an investigation looking to find evidence to validate paranormal claims, as opposed to falsifying them. This leads to confirmation bias, or a way of selectively perceiving things so that they support what you already believe.





**rt** [readthat.com/r/paranormal](https://readthat.com/r/paranormal)

## Is the Orpheus Group a Government Hoax?

*Submitted three weeks ago by Skepticity92*

I know that most of us around here are believers. I had my first experience when I was seven. I woke up in the middle of the night to see a kid about my age standing in my bedroom. He was soaking wet, clothes sticking to him like he'd showered with them on. I screamed, flipped the light on, and he was gone. We later found out the family who lived in our house before us had lost their son in a drowning accident.

Anyway, my point is, I believe in ghosts.

What I don't believe in, is this Orpheus shit. A private (and very wealthy) organization that employs people who can basically become ghosts themselves? And you — Joe public — can hire them to deal with your ghost problems from the other side?

It's horseshit. This place is clearly a front for the government.

**43 Comments**

**ISeeCoolPeople:** Dude, did you wake up to find you peed the bed after you saw the 'soaking wet' ghost boy? LOL!

**WhoUGunaCall:** Why would the government waste money creating Orpheus? It's not like they need another way to spy on us. We already have the NSA and Homeland Security. They're watching you through your Xbox right now.

**ThirdEyelash:** What if they were using it as a recruiting tool? Think about it — we know some people are more sensitive to paranormal phenomena than others, right? So if all these people across the country are calling and reporting stuff to Orpheus, it could be a way for them to identify people who are actually gifted.

## Modern Resurgence

With the cynical society we live in today, you'd think that concepts of spiritualism and mediumship would have fewer subscribers than ever. Studies show that worldwide, overall belief in organized religion is declining. And with advances in information sharing, technology and science, many myths and legends of yesteryear have been explained or debunked.

But ghost hunting and paranormal investigating are more popular than ever, and that shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. Dozens of reality TV shows and a myriad of web series have helped lead to the re-popularization of ghost hunting, and technology has become affordable enough for even paranormal investigators on a budget to outfit themselves with the most typical tools of the trade. It's also easier than ever to find potential investigation locations, as there are

thousands of websites and dozens of smartphone apps dedicated to cataloging allegedly haunted locations.

The smartphone itself could even be considered the modern equivalent of Tony Cornell's SPIDER (Spontaneous Psychophysical Incident Data Electronic Recorder), in that it is one device with multiple measurement and recording tools. There are even smartphone apps for infrared video recording, EMF (Electromagnetic Field) and EVP (Electric Voice Phenomena) detection, temperature monitoring and more (of course, the reliability of those apps is another story).

In addition to the access that information and technology provide, another possible reason for the surge in amateur paranormal investigation is that there are no rules or regulations posing barriers to entry. Anyone can decide to become a paranormal investigator and anyone can call themselves a ghost hunter.

But is that necessarily a good thing?





## Hunting Vs. Busting

As it is used today, the term ghost hunting is related to the attempted detection, observation and documentation of ghosts. But what happens if your ghost hunt results in finding an actual ghost? And what if it's a ghost that isn't welcome in the place it's haunting?

Most paranormal investigators are not in the business of getting rid of ghosts. There is often hope that communicating with a ghost, or discovering the reason a ghost is tied to a particular place, will help the spirit pass on to the other side. Perhaps there is a body that wasn't buried properly. Perhaps there is a family heirloom that must be returned to its rightful place. Perhaps there is a crime that must be solved

for the spirit to be at peace. In these situations, a paranormal investigator may be able to aid in helping the spirit move on. But they will frequently need to call in some help.

There are also cases where the spirit in question doesn't want to leave, and that changes everything. In many cases, paranormal investigators will be assisted by psychics or mediums who can help determine the reason the site is being haunted.

From salting and smudging to rituals and exorcism, the methods available for dealing with unwanted spirits are many, but also require knowledge, training and sometimes extranormal abilities in order for them to be effective. An experienced hunter is equipped for the job, and knows when and who to call for help.

## Interview Transcript: The Paranoid Paranormist, Episode #64

**CF:** This is the Paranoid Paranormist Craig Freeling, and boy do I have an exciting episode of the show for you today. I'm joined by Nick Torrance, who's well known in our circles for having been an investigator of the paranormal for over twenty-five years now.

**NT:** Yeah, I like to say I was in the business of hunting ghosts before it became a business (chuckles).

**CF:** Well, thanks for coming on the show, Nick, I know you're always a pretty busy guy around the holidays.



**NT:** Seems like I'm busy all year round nowadays, but I'm happy to talk to you, Craig. What you're doing with this show is a great thing, helping people sift through all the bullshit out there.

**CF:** I want to go back to what you said about being busy all year round in a minute, but let's start with why I wanted you on the show this week, because it relates to that. I want to talk about the pop culture phenomenon paranormal investigating has become, and how that's affected people like you, who have been doing this work for decades.

**NT:** In short, it's a scourge. It's the worst thing to ever happen to us.

**CF:** I don't disagree with you, Nick, but tell the listeners why you think that.

**NT:** Well first off, we now live in an age where everyone can become an armchair expert. Knowledge – or what passes for it – is literally at our fingertips in a way it never has been before. A quick Google search and you can learn enough about anything to make it sound like you know what you're talking about.

**CF:** But, and I'm just playing devil's advocate here, a lot of people would argue that freely accessible information leads to a more educated society.

**NT:** Yeah, well those people probably read that idea on the internet. And worse, it was probably part of a much longer, more reasoned thought that they didn't bother to finish reading. Which is another problem – there's not depth to this so-called research that people are doing. They skim a little info off the top, and off they go, thinking they know what the hell they're doing.

**CF:** Hence the armchair expert thing.

**NT:** Right. But see, information is only one part of the equation. I can take a theory class and learn how to read sheet music, but that doesn't mean I can pick up a guitar and shred like Eddie Van Halen.

**CF:** (Laughs) I've heard you play, and that's an understatement.

**NT:** You get my point, though. The other part of that equation is experience, and there's no substitute for that. When I was first coming up, I learned from some of the best investigators the field has ever seen. I sought them out – scientists, former cops, military, mediums – everyone I could. I went out on jobs with them and I learned. I studied observation and investigation techniques, audio and video production, photography and more. And even after all that, the first thing I learned was that I had no goddamn idea what I was getting myself into. And neither do any of these morons who watch a few scripted TV shows, download a night-vision filter for their smartphone camera and then go breaking into abandoned buildings...

**CF:** Has the increase in amateur ghost hunters made things more difficult for you?

**NT:** Abso-freaking-lutely. There's nothing worse than prepping for a job, controlling for as many variables as you can, setting up your site – and then having some YouTuber and their friends come stomping through the investigation site, live-blogging their antics and calling it a ghost hunt.

**CF:** Has that actually happened to you?

**NT:** Yup – six months ago at a high school in Pennsylvania. I got hired by the administration to come in and investigate the site after a bunch



of students reported some strange occurrences. A student had fallen from one of the lighting rigs and broken their neck prepping for a performance to Hamlet twenty years ago. When the drama club began preparing for a new performance of Hamlet, some of them reported seeing the spirit of the student who died. The first night I was set up there, a few kids broke into the school looking for the ghost of the student.

**CF:** Did you confront them?

**NT:** I did one better – I scared the shit out of them.

**CF:** (Laughs)

**NT:** Yeah, that time I only lost one night of work, and I was able to confirm the actual activity there. The school wanted to cancel the play, but I convinced them not to, and once they put Hamlet on, the spirit passed on and hasn't returned. Turns out that when the kid died back in the day, they canceled the play. I had a feeling the spirit just wanted to see the show go on.

**CF:** All's well that ends well, I guess.

**NT:** Yeah, but back to your point – these kids calling themselves ghost hunters or paranormal investigators are making it a lot more difficult for us legit hunters. Not only are they undercutting us on jobs, but their antics have made the cops close off access to certain sites, which puts us in a bad spot. And that's not even counting the danger they might be putting themselves in.

**CF:** You mean from the cops or other hunters?

**NT:** I mean from the spirits themselves. You and I both know there are different kinds of ghosts, and some of them don't just slam doors shut and move furniture around. Most of these people don't know a haunter from a wisp. They could run up against something they are completely unprepared for, and then what?

**CF:** And then they're in trouble.

**NT:** Yeah, the kind of trouble that turns you from a ghost hunter into a ghost.

## **Interview Transcript: The Paranoid Paranormist, Episode #22**

**CF:** I'm back with my guest May Rubin, a medium who's been conducting paranormal investigations for the past twenty-five years. And I want to get back to something you mentioned before our break, May. You said things have gotten "noisier." Can you elaborate on that?

**MR:** Sure, Craig. As you're well aware, with the rise of the internet and cell phones over the past twenty years, in many ways we are more connected than ever, right?

**CF:** Absolutely.

**MR:** But I think all of this technology is having a detrimental effect on our ability to perceive psychic phenomena.

**CF:** How so?

**MR:** Imagine trying to eavesdrop on a conversation across a crowded room. Even if you can hear, it's very difficult to sort out the rest of the noise



## GHOST HUNTING'S UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

A recent study out of Providence University showed a dramatic rise in reported paranormal activity in the US over the past decade. Alleged ghost sightings and haunting activity reports have risen by over 40% since 2005. Similar studies were conducted in the UK in 2012 and Sweden in 2014, and showed large increases as well.

Much of the increase has been attributed to the fact that paranormal investigation has become something of

a pop culture phenomenon over that time, with both ghosts and ghost hunting being dramatized in reality TV shows, big budget movies and popular fiction.

But recently, some psychical researchers have begun to put forward a new idea, and one that would be quite concerning if true. Their theory: that the increase in activity is actually a response by the spirit world to the ghost hunting activity of humans.

Doctor Anya Alonso, head of Metaphysics at

the Phillips Institute, is putting together a group of researchers from several countries to examine the potential correlation.

"There is no denying the increase in reported activity," she said. "And what's more concerning is the number of reported incidents that involve injury or even death. A growing concern is that we may be experiencing some sort of backlash from the spirit world. If that were true, it would change much of what we think we know about the nature of ghosts."

and home in on what's important. Because of technology, almost everywhere is a crowded space when it comes to wifi, cell signals, electronic signatures. It's a lot to sort through.

**CF:** But you think that the spirits' messages are still there, right? They're just not getting through?

**MR:** Well, I used to think that, yes. But over the past few years, I'm starting to think something else is going on. And it's very concerning.

**CF:** Like what?

**MR:** I think there are spirits who are beginning to use this technological interference as cover.

**CF:** Cover?

**MR:** Yes — they're using it to hide their activities, making it difficult for even those of us who are gifted to perceive them.

**CF:** Cover for what? And to what end?

**MR:** I'm not sure yet — I've only begun to put the signs together and compare notes with other mediums. But I believe something is building in the spirit realm. And I think it's meant to be a secret.

**CF:** If this is something you think others have noticed, I'm surprised we're not hearing more about it.

**MR:** Oh, I think you'll be hearing more about it soon.



## AUTOPSY RAISES NEW QUESTIONS IN GHOST HUNTER DEATHS

TORONTO, ON — New information has come to light regarding the mysterious deaths of two university students two weeks ago. The bodies of Jared Hannigan and Paige Simmons were found in the basement of the abandoned Fairview Hospital site during the early morning hours of September 13th. Few details were given at the time, although police did say the two students had initially been reported missing by fellow students in their dorm.

According to friends, both Hannigan and Simmons spent much of their free time visiting allegedly haunted sites throughout the local area. They had been gathering footage for a planned web series on ghost hunting. The Fairview Hospital site has long been regarded as haunted, and several paranormal investigations have taken place over the years, though no evidence of significant paranormal activity had been documented.

That may be about to change, however. According to the police report, both Hannigan and

Simmons were found huddled in a small storage room in the psychiatric wing of the facility. Due to rigor mortis, the two bodies were unable to be separated at the scene, and had to be brought out together on a single stretcher. A paramedic who was interviewed stated that both of their faces were “frozen in fear.”

The autopsy report was released today, and the results have both the medical examiner and police scratching their collective heads. There were no external injuries to either of the bodies, and hypothermia was ruled out as a cause of death. But both Hannigan and Simmons suffered trauma to their internal organs, and their subcutaneous soft tissue was “littered with contusions.”

When pressed for what could possibly have caused such injuries, the medical examiner was at a loss. “It was almost as if something was inside of them, trying to get out.”

## HAUNTED HUNTER TRIAL GOES TO JURY



This morning at the York County courthouse, jury deliberations began in the Raymond Leland murder case. Leland is charged with three counts of homicide for the alleged murders of his fiancée, Laura Knox, and friends Mark Lynch and Jennifer Palmer seven months ago. The murders occurred in a small cabin in the forest near Mount Ashbrook. The case has been dubbed the “Haunted Hunter” case because of both the circumstances of the murders and the defense Leland’s attorneys have put forth.

According to friends and family, Leland, Knox, Lynch and Palmer were all experienced campers and frequently took trips to the forests of Northern Maine together. They were also amateur paranormal investigators, and would

often visit sites that were alleged to be haunted, documenting their attempts to find evidence of ghosts on Leland’s YouTube channel.

The cabin near Mount Ashbrook was alleged to have once been owned by a writer named Elliot Woodard. During the height of spiritualism in the mid-1800s, Woodard wrote several essays on the nature of death and the existence of an afterlife. He also allegedly wrote a book called *Originem Mortis* (The Origins of Death) that has become a favorite mystery of paranormalists, as no physical copies of the book have ever been found.

According to Leland, he and his three friends traveled to the cabin to attempt to communicate with the ghost of Woodard, as he passed away in the cabin in 1898. Leland claims that the group performed a summoning ritual to conjure the spirit of Woodard, and that was the last thing he remembered until waking up in a jail cell after police had already taken him into custody.



## Elizabeth Chambers

Elizabeth "Betsy" Chambers is a 46-year-old veteran journalist and author. She has worked for various newspapers throughout the country and covered everything from the crime beat to Washington politics. She received national recognition for her work as an embedded journalist during the Iraq War. At 38, Betsy left the newspaper world to become an author and dive deeper into particular subjects that interested her. Of particular fascination to her were occupations that involved the search for or pursuit of something.

She wrote her first book, *Chasing Outlaws*, after spending a year with various bounty hunters across the United States. Her second book, *Chasing Lies*, was about the world of private investigation, particularly PIs that investigate cheating spouses and partners.

Betsy was in the process of researching her third book, *Chasing Fortune*, about deep sea treasure hunters, when a tragedy changed her life forever. A case Betsy wrote about in *Chasing Lies* featured a man who was caught cheating on his wife, and the information the PI found was used in the divorce proceedings, resulting in a sizeable alimony settlement in favor of the man's wife. Despite his name being changed for the book, the man blamed Betsy for what happened to him. Betsy came home one evening to find her longtime girlfriend Alison dead, as the man had forced his way into their apartment and killed Alison and then himself.

Shortly after Alison's death, Betsy awoke in the middle of the night to find what she believed was Alison's ghost watching her sleep. On another occasion she believed that Alison's spirit was trying to communicate with her, to warn her about something. She never saw the ghost again after that, but believes that Alison is still present in this world, trying to communicate with her.

She became obsessed with the concept of ghosts, and decided to make the spirit world the focus of her new book, *Chasing Death*. She started with mediums, but had no luck connecting with the spirit of Alison. She has since moved to following ghost hunters on cases in hopes of learning more about how they find and sometimes connect with spirits.







# Tools, Tactics, and Troubles

Ghosts seem harder to please than we are; it is as though they haunted for haunting's sake – much as we relive, brood, and smoulder over our pasts.

– Elizabeth Bowen, *The Second Ghost Book* (1952)

*Taken from a series of emails from Jamila Nassar of Nightcrawler Paranormal, addressed to Nicola Giovanni.*

## Welcome to the Team!

We don't have anything so grand as a handbook, so I hope you don't mind all these emails to get you caught up. I keep telling Jeff that we should write some kind of formal guide, but he never finds the time and he keeps the rest of us too busy to give it a shot. In related news, I hope you're prepared for some really late nights.

Ever since our YouTube channel went viral with that shadow-person footage last fall, plenty of people have tried to join Nightcrawler Paranormal, but you're the first recruit in a long time to actually make the cut. The core of the team started out as a tight-knit group of friends – that wasn't just a gimmick to help sell the show – and it's hard to add new people when you're not always sure who to trust. We don't want thrill-seekers or people who want to rocket to fame on the back of some television hit (not that YouTube really counts). We truly believe in what we're doing here and our first priority is the evidence.

So what is it that we do? To be honest, there's a lot of sitting around in the dark listening to old buildings creak, but

beyond that, we seek out places reputed to be haunted in an attempt to debunk or confirm the presence of something genuinely paranormal. In its strictest definition, "paranormal" means anything that science can't prove, but we think science just hasn't caught up. This is why we focus so much on the evidence, and, while most people think "ghosts" when they're talking about the paranormal, we try not to rule anything out. Psychic phenomena, temporal anomalies, even cryptids like Bigfoot all fall under the blanket of the paranormal. Think that's weird? Weird is every ghost-hunter's idea of fun. Just be prepared to keep an open mind and be sure to document everything you encounter.

## Meet the Nightcrawlers

Our first meeting this month will be Wednesday night, at Jeff's house. The start time is seven, but things don't usually get rolling until after eight. The address is attached. Since it will be your first time meeting anyone aside from Jeff and myself, let me give you a brief overview of the rest of the team. We all met one another through a variety of methods – paranormal conventions, ghost-hunts, local talks and lectures,



recommendations from friends. You're the first person we've added who made contact through the website, but don't feel weird or awkward about that. Your application wowed all of us.

As you know, the group founders are Jeff, Casey, and Alan. Jeff's the people person and, since he's the host of the YouTube show, he's the face of the team for fans. Alan's always happiest behind a camera. His background in filmography is why the show looks as professional as it does, even on our teensy budget. Casey's job as a social worker gives her an edge when interviewing witnesses. She's scary-good at reading people, so if you have any dark secrets, watch out!

Jeff and Alan grew up together, and they got into the paranormal pretty early on. They both lost family members when they were young, but the real catalyst was the loss of their buddy Kyle in high school. Kyle died in a car crash, and, independent of one another, Jeff and Alan got visits from him after he died.

At first, they didn't talk about what they saw. Jeff's family was pretty religious, so anything to do with ghosts and the paranormal was severely frowned upon. Alan's family just didn't talk about anything, and he didn't initially feel comfortable sharing, even with his best friend. It wasn't until college that the truth came out, and they decided to found a group in order to better study experiences like theirs. That was where they met Casey. She was studying psychology, and all three of them took a class together on human perception. At first, she was skeptical of the guys' quest for understanding, but after a couple experiences of her own, she came on board.

Stan and his partner Rashid came next. The guys and Casey drove all the way up to this paranormal convention in the Upper Peninsula. It was their first professional speaking engagement as Nightcrawler Paranormal. Stan and Rashid were among the attendees, and they loved the presentation so much, they stayed after to chat. That was how Jeff and the gang learned that Stan and his husband lived just over in Ypsilanti. They were so happy to realize there were teams closer to home than Sault Ste. Marie, they asked to join right away. Stan's an EMT. Rashid works as an electrician. They're both vets, so they're super cool under pressure.

I came along purely by accident. I was volunteering at the library as part of this Celebrate Diversity group. The meeting was over, and my ride was late, so I wandered over to where this other group was doing a presentation on what I thought was local history. It turned out to be local hauntings. At the time, some of their talk about spirits sounded pretty weird, so I almost walked away. But then I started thinking about how much crap I get from people for my own beliefs — you've met me, so you know from my head scarf that I'm Muslim — and I decided I wanted to learn more about what these paranormal people believed. Of course, the presenters were Jeff and Casey. Alan was sick that day. I participated in my first ghost-

hunt later that month and I've been hooked ever since.

We met Angie when the team did an investigation at one of the buildings run by the historical society she works for. She stuck around as kind of a baby-sitter for the property, but enjoyed herself so much, she asked if she could come and help with the next investigation. The team was a little hesitant at first. Angie's got MS, so most of the time, she's wheelchair bound. A lot of sites we investigate aren't exactly handicap-accessible, but she's perfectly happy minding the computers wherever we set up our central base of operations. She catches stuff I know I'd miss on the monitors, and her background in genealogical research has been invaluable. Chandra came to us through Angie. She's an engineer who works at Ford, and while she doesn't really believe anything we're investigating is truly paranormal, she has a blast testing gadgets to see if she can prove herself wrong. She's my favorite mad scientist.

## A Tomb with a View

I hope you like the subject line of this email. Silly puns are my weakness — I have no regrets.

As you might have guessed, today's topic is about locations. Purported hauntings are everywhere, from that phantom hitchhiker everyone sees on I-94 near Dearborn to the quaint old lady who the owner of my favorite bakery down the street swears shows up every time he makes baklava. For paranormal investigators, the trick is to find a haunting that is both consistent and accessible. For consistent hauntings, I mean something that plays out more than once in a blue moon. There are plenty of hauntings that are purported to happen only at certain times or under very specific conditions. A ghost that keeps a schedule might seem like investigation gold, but those kinds of hauntings tend to be incredibly specific — often inconveniently so.

Accessible hauntings can be even harder to come by. The phantom hitchhiker on I-94 covers a very specific stretch of road, but we'd be hard-pressed to carry out a proper investigation. First of all, there's no good place to set up our base of operations. There's no reliable shelter, which is something we've worked around before, but that gets dodgy for both us and the equipment, especially if it rains. A bigger issue is power. We have three computers running at all times to record the various audio and camera feeds, and if we plan to keep them going all night, they need a hardline. We know better than to rely on unplugged laptops — batteries are notoriously finicky in highly active locations. I know some people chalk that up to confirmation bias, but trust me, it's a real thing. Whatever equipment you're using, always pack spare batteries.

With that location, though, power's not even the worst of our problems. Even if we got a back-up generator or something to solve the power issue along I-94, we don't have nearly enough stationary cameras to cover six and a half miles of highway, and with the way Detroiters drive, it's not really safe



for any of us to investigate out there on foot. And all of that's irrelevant if we get caught by the Highway Patrol in the middle of our investigation. I-94 is a limited access highway, and according to Section 257.679a of the Michigan Vehicle Code, pedestrians aren't allowed to be there. Period. And I can tell you they won't make exceptions for ghost-hunters, because I've already called.

I-94 is out, because it doesn't pass the PPS test. That's one of Jeff's handy acronyms. Just like my puns, you'll get used to them. This one stands for Power, Permission, and Safety, generally in that order (although Jeff likes to put Permission first in interviews). That acronym is how we assess all of our potential locations, and if they don't stand up, they're off the list. For myself, I like to add a B on the end. That's for Bathroom. Having access to working toilets during a long night of investigating is a luxury you'll come to enjoy.

## Shadow Chasing

Sorry — I got interrupted. My boss has me typing up a deposition and he needed a précis on his desk before two. Good thing I'm fast with the keyboard.

Now, let's get back to locations. Before we even attempt to get permission to investigate a location, we have to determine the likelihood that anything is really there, and that means vetting the related reports. None of us want to lug all of that equipment out just to discover the only inhuman infestation involves an army of unusually sized rats. The vetting process involves a little detective work, and the amount of time we have to put into that usually depends on the initial source of the reports.

Some of our reports come pre-vetted (although we still check up on them anyway — if nothing else, it's good practice). There are a lot of paranormal teams active around the world, and a lot of us keep in touch. The good groups know this isn't a competition — we're all seeking evidence for the same thing. The more we share about what we know, the better it is for everyone, so we all make a point to exchange referrals to really active locations whenever we come across them. There are a couple of good websites that facilitate that communication. I'll send you links.

The reports we get from other teams are the easy ones. On the opposite end of the spectrum are the reports submitted through the website. With the show we host on YouTube, we've got a growing fanbase, and all of those fans have pet locations they want us to check out. We started getting so many emails and Facebook messages that Jeff just set up a submission form on the website. That makes it easy for fans to make referrals, but it's also generated a lot of white noise.

Easily half of the submissions are people trolling us. Some are from fans who've gotten so out of touch with reality that they think the spirits are talking to them through their television screen. One guy tried to convince us that he saw

a corpse walk out of the Fratello Brothers Funeral Home in Mount Clemens, pick up a manhole cover, then disappear into the sewers. Poor fool never realized it was just some college kids filming a movie. We checked.

Way too many of our tipsters are like zombie guy — they saw something they mistook for strange and never questioned the evidence of their eyes. But then there are the genuine leads, and those are the only reason I haven't asked Jeff to take that submission form down. There's just so much to wade through. We trade off going over the weekly submissions, because it's a mind-numbing grind. For funsies, I keep a private file of the really special messages. Sometimes we take them out and read them after a really long night of investigating. A few are good for a laugh.

Our other sources for leads include newsfeeds, word of mouth, local legends, mysteries connected with historic events, and police reports. All of these provide good fodder and they don't always directly describe their events as paranormal. It pays to keep your ear to the ground and, if something catches your interest, follow up to see where it goes. Don't rule anything out. I once bagged us this awesome poltergeist case in Ferndale after following some clickbait cat video. The person who uploaded the video had no idea they'd captured something paranormal going on, right behind the silly cat.

## No Stone Unturned

What a long workday! Glad it's over. I just got your email. So many great questions, Nicola. Let's start with the best way to verify reports of paranormal activity — especially in light of zombie guy. I had no idea you had family that worked at that funeral home. Small world, huh?

Before you tackle the paranormal reports, you should always research the location itself first. You never know what you might turn up, and sometimes the very history of a location debunks the paranormal claims you've heard.

Research is so much easier now than when the team started out. Ten years ago, research meant gaining access to the county archives or spending an afternoon at the library, ruining your eyes with the microfiche. But, in this age of information, a sharply-honed internet search will usually do the trick, at least for the initial sally.

What you're looking for, first, is any evidence, historic and verifiable, that ties in with the main thrust of the paranormal reports but is not paranormal itself. Do people say that the decrepit old building at the end of the street is haunted because a former owner hung himself in the attic? First, check to see if the place even has an attic, because that's happened to me before, and then go through all the old records of previous owners. Track down their death certificates — those are public records — and see whether or not any of those previous owners committed suicide or even died under suspicious circumstances. If you can't find any evidence that the person



supposed to be haunting the place even existed, move on – what you’re dealing with is urban legend, pure and simple.

But what if the guy really did exist – and his certificate lists strangulation as the cause of death? Now you’ve hit pay-dirt, but the search isn’t over yet. Just because someone died at a location doesn’t mean they’re the one haunting it. It’s rarely that simple. Track down police reports, newspaper articles, even websites and blog posts that tie into related events. If the building you’re researching is a public structure or something in the National Historic Register, gather everything you can find about who built it and when and why. Most truly haunted places aren’t the site of one isolated event. Often, there’s a whole chain of interconnected tragedy. Leave no stone unturned, as the saying goes – and in some cases, you should take that literally. In the pioneer days, it was a common practice to bury a cat or sometimes a dog under one of the foundation stones. From the folklore I’ve researched, they started burying cats only because it was frowned upon when their ancestors buried humans, so you never know what’s hiding underneath until you look.

Google’s digital archives, Wikipedia, news sites, and blogs that cover local history, genealogy, true crime – these are all part of the detective work you can do from behind a desk. Angie excels at it, and it works great for her limited mobility. For those of us who don’t need a chair to get around, it pays to get out in the field, but we all try to meet sources face to face as well. It goes without saying that we want to determine whether or not we have credible witnesses. More than that, we need to verify that first-hand witnesses to a paranormal event exist, not just a friend of a step-sister who heard this thing once. You know how that goes. If you have the names of purported witnesses, track down their contact info and give them a call. Or send them a text – most people actually answer those.

If names and cell numbers of potential witnesses aren’t easy to come by, reach out to the people at the location itself. If it’s a place of business or a government building, anyone working there might be under orders not to talk about paranormal events, so tread carefully in your initial conversation. It helps to focus first on the history angle, and if you drop a light-hearted joke in there about hauntings or ghosts, most people will laugh – and then dish on any experiences they might have had while on the job. People are funny like that – as long as they can laugh it off, they’ll often open up about things they would never expect another living soul to believe.

Once you have this mountain of information revolving around the location and its related reports, then you can bring it to the team and, as a group, we’ll consider the feasibility of staging an investigation. Jeff will put the location to the PPS test, like he does everything, and if it passes, it goes onto our list.

We’ve developed a fairly extensive list over the five years Nightcrawler Paranormal has been active, and the quality of

the reports connected with each location allows us to class the suspected haunting based on the level of violence that’s played out at the site, the severity of experiences reported by credible witnesses, and what I like to call its overall creep factor – all those quirky, apparently unrelated coincidences like brown-outs or inexplicable structural failure that build up over the years and suggest that something is simply not right.

## The Hidden Gems

I got your email about taking private cases. The short version of the answer is no. I know there are some groups out there that investigate private residences with an aim toward helping clients resolve or otherwise acclimate to their hauntings, but that’s not for Nightcrawler Paranormal. First off, it gets into issues of liability, and we just don’t have the money to hire a lawyer, even with the funds we bring in from the channel on YouTube. Additionally, our business is not to drive out the ghosts, which is something client-based teams claim to do. We only want to investigate the phenomenon so we can better understand paranormal experiences as a whole. As Jeff would say, ORR. Observe, Record, Report. The evidence is the goal.

Because we’re not keen on private clients and we stick to the PPS test, Nightcrawler Paranormal ends up investigating historic public buildings more than anything else. Lucky for us, our head researcher, Angie, works for the historical society one county over. She helps us get into some of the most amazing locations – abandoned asylums, old jailhouses, aging theaters that were shut down long before you or I were born. Did you know there’s a speakeasy hidden away in an old warehouse building downtown? The upper part was a dance hall in the thirties and we caught this great EVP of footsteps – not pacing, but moving in rhythm to a dance. Alan thinks it was the Charleston.

Unlike a lot of the ghost-hunting teams with cable shows, we try to avoid the high-profile hauntings. We’re always seeking the hidden gems, buildings that no one’s thought to investigate before. Not only is it thrilling to break new ground, but there’s no precedent to taint what we expect from our evidence. We have the history, the witness reports, and nothing more. That blank slate is incredibly valuable, and it really leads to an exciting night. Besides, when you’re the first team to formally investigate a location, anything you get is ground-breaking.

I’m not bashing the teams that hit the old stand-bys, but if you ask me, the famous locations get stale once they’ve had too many investigators tromp through. That’s especially true of the commercialized sites that open their doors to people every night. It’s like the ghosts get bored. I mean, it’s got to get old, week in and week out with all of these strange people bumbling around in the dark asking, “If you knocked on that door just now, could you knock again for me?” I bet some





of the ghosts get smart and just wait for the living people to leave. I mean, it's not like we can out-wait them. The dead have all the time in the world.

## Night Visions

This weekend will be your first investigation with the Nightcrawlers! We've been cleared to investigate the old Masonic Theater downtown. Jeff plans to be on site by four on Saturday to get an idea of where he wants the main cameras. I'll be there then, but you and the rest of the team won't have to show until six or so. Of course, you're welcome to come early as well — we can always use an extra pair of hands to bring in Jeff's equipment. Get plenty of sleep the night before. We'll be there until three or four in the morning — maybe later, if things get intense.

I know it seems gimmicky, but almost all of our investigations take place at night — with good reason. Most of us have day jobs and families, and we aren't really free to perform investigations except at night. More than that, filming at night helps with the evidence. There's a lot of noise you never think about during the day — cars, motorcycles, people slamming doors, kids playing, that loud argument down the street — no matter how remote the location, every little sound gets picked up on our mics, and it's nearly impossible to separate the ambient noise from something related to the haunting (or supposed haunting, depending on which side of the skeptical boundary you happen to fall on). Add into the mix hundreds of years' worth of folklore telling us that ghosts are more likely to be active at night, and it's hard to argue against the practice

of chasing spirits in the dark.

Did I mention that some researchers think belief itself has a demonstrable effect on a spirit's ability to manifest? I'm not sure what I think about that personally, but if there's a chance it will improve our collection of evidence, we'll try anything once. Seriously — did you see the episode where they locked me into that pit for the dangerously deranged at that old asylum? It was really just me and that hand-held camera, alone in the dark. Five hours of that! We go the distance, and then some.

Don't worry, though. Jeff won't ask you to do anything that challenging yet. This first investigation is just so we can get to know how you fit in the team and so you can get acclimated to our investigative style. We will expect you to know the basics, however, so make sure you've stocked your kit.

## Equipment

I know you've said you've done investigations before, but let me make sure we're on the same page about what you should bring before Saturday is upon us.

Your main kit should be easily portable and, ideally, something you can carry on your person at all times. Angie uses this tactical vest she got from her husband — the thing is all pockets. I double up with a backpack and a fannypack, and I really recommend that approach — it keeps your hands free for your flashlight and camera all night. Make sure you've got all your basics: a flashlight, extra batteries, digital camera and audio recorder if you've got them, and any other hand-held detection device you might own.



I don't know how germ-phobic you are, but I always like to keep some hand sanitizer and wet wipes in my kit as well. Most of these places are full of dust, spiders, bats and mice, and you're going to get dirty. Wear clothes you might go hiking in and comfortable shoes. Most locations have no heat or air conditioning, so take that into account. Saturday's supposed to get pretty chilly, so thermal underwear and fingerless gloves might be to your benefit.

We'll have a cooler of bottled water and energy drinks at the location, and Angie always bakes something tasty, but some little packs of dried fruit or jerky that you can carry on your person can help keep you going if you get assigned to a remote end of the location and can't swing by HQ for a couple of hours.

If you have a smartphone, there are a couple of apps you might find handy. I'm not talking any of those silly ghost-hunting apps. All of them are bunk. Instead, look for this app that carpenters use. It lets you use your phone as a level. If there's a flat surface, like a table or bookcase, that you think might be moving on its own, lay your smartphone down on it with this app open. Your eyes might trick you in the dark, but the app will help verify if there's actual motion.

Another app that's unexpectedly useful in ghost-hunting is that one that lets you turn your phone into a virtual lighter — you know, the one they made for concerts so people don't burn the place down. The lighter app taps in to your device's microphone and makes it so the virtual flame flickers in response to your breath. On most phones, that microphone is really sensitive. If you set the phone down in an area without wind or any significant drafts (be sure to check first!), you can ask the spirits present to move the flame in response to questions. The little bit of air motion required to affect the flame doesn't take a whole lot of energy on the spirits' part, and I've found it really useful for confirming the presence of an intelligent entity. Plus, with the clear graphics of the app, you can capture that response in real time with your hand-held camera.

## Set-Up and Show Time

On a typical night, Jeff likes to finish set-up by seven-thirty, eight at the latest. Especially with big locations, that means we'll have to hustle. We have about a dozen IR cameras, all wired, that get positioned in the corners of active rooms. The wires are a pain, but when we experimented with a wireless system, it kept cutting out every time activity spiked. So, wires it is. We've got spools and spools of extra cord — I swear, that stuff takes up at least half the space in the van. We use painter's tape to fix the wires to the corners and along the edges of the walls so nobody trips.

Before the cameras go up, Jeff will go over the entire building with his EMF detector. That's a device typically used by electricians to read electro-magnetic waves from wires and other power-sources in the walls and ceilings of buildings. Way

too many ghost-hunters out there treat their EMF detectors as if they were ghost-readers and, while changes in electro-magnetic frequencies have been associated with certain manifestations, the EMF detector's best use is to track down false positives. People and animals sense and respond to instances of high EMF, but we almost never have any clue what we're reacting to. Those frequencies, especially if they're intense and concentrated, can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, even an oppressive feeling. A lot of people mistake their reaction to high levels of EMF for a haunting. Jeff makes sure he maps every location so we know if there are EMF hotspots to look out for and also, if we do get spikes later in the night, we'll know they're not tied to something already physically present in the building.

In addition to the cameras, we've got motion detectors that we set up in doorways or along hallways with reported activity. There are digital thermometers that measure the ambient temperature in every room, and Jeff recently picked up a bunch of these neat little hand-held barometric pressure readers we've started to use. Most of us have experienced that weird heavy feeling in the air where our ears pop just before something major occurs, and we think that's a barometric shift — which means it's measurable. Like a lot of ghost-hunting equipment, these little gadgets were actually built for something else entirely — they keep track of barometric pressure shifts to help the outdoorsy-types know when the fish are biting — but we think they'll help us track those shifts and show that the heavy sensation is something objectively present in the environment, rather than a subjective experience produced by standing for hours in the dark.

Alan's wife bought him a FLIR camera for the holidays — a little hand-held model — and we take turns using that in addition to the stationary thermometers. It reads surface temperature in real-time, showing changes visually. It comes in really handy with cold spots — those concentrated areas associated with certain manifestations where the temperature significantly drops. The camera records everything with a time stamp, so we can line its footage up side by side with the stuff from the other cameras and show that what the living investigators are feeling in terms of temperature is objectively real. It's super cool.

Chandra brings all kinds of extra gizmos, from smart-cameras with special facial recognition software to things like that DemonSpeak Stick, which its creator claimed took readings from the environment and translated the data into relevant words (she took it apart — it was just a randomized audio chip pre-programmed with a bank of twenty words). Like with DemonSpeak, she sometimes picks up the latest ghost-hunting gadget just to confirm or debunk its usefulness through a proper field test. With her background in engineering and her contacts at Ford, she often cobbles together projects of her own. They don't always work, but when they do, they're amazing.



When it comes time to start the investigation, everyone convenes at HQ. Together, we synchronize the time stamps on all of our cameras and any hand-held audio recorders we're using individually to capture EVPs. We do a final check of all the cameras and other equipment set up throughout the rooms, and then Jeff gives us our assignments for the night. After that, it's lights out, except for individual flashlights or headlamps — and Angie's lights at HQ. We work in two-hour shifts, rotating so Angie always has at least one other person with her throughout the night. To communicate, we use the walkies. You'll learn pretty quick that in these old buildings, you can't rely on your cellphone. As a side note, remember to talk in a normal voice at all times — no shouting (if you can help it) and no whispers. Shouts and whispers both can give us false positives in the audio, and we don't want to think we've gotten the best EVP of the night only to discover it was just one of us all along.

## Psychics and the Occult

Because you asked about this specifically, I'm going to give it its own email. The official version is this: Nightcrawler Paranormal prefers tech over psychics because the tech provides evidence that is objective and verifiable. Psychic impres-

sions, by their very nature, are subjective and subsequently difficult to conclusively prove. But between you, me, and the fencepost, we use a psychic all the time. It's Angie. We just don't advertise her gifts openly, because psychics have such a spotty reputation among other paranormal teams — and rightly so. Before we met Angie, the only so-called "psychics" who tried to come work for us were obviously lying about their abilities — either to us, or to themselves.

Angie is someone we trust, and even with her, we don't ever treat her impressions as evidence. We use her more like a bloodhound. If she gets a feeling about a particular room, we point all our equipment at it to see what we can capture in a recordable, reviewable format.

You also asked about occult stuff, and that gets even trickier. I'll admit, it's not my area of expertise. But Stan is Pagan clergy, and he knows a thing or two. Certainly, he's our go-to guy when we find any evidence of possible ritual activity at a location. If he doesn't understand what he's looking at, chances are he has a book or knows a contact in the Pagan community who can tell us what's up.

I think that's everything I need to tell you before go-time on Saturday. If you read this email before the night is out, please remember to give me an answer about your shirt. It's super last-minute, but Rashid's dad says he can still customize it with your name if he gets your information before ten tomorrow. Most of us have our last names across the back, kind





of like a sports team, so did you want “Giovanni” on yours or just your first name?

If we don’t get your answer in time, don’t worry. There’s always the next ghost-hunt.

See you soon!

## Other Beings

*Transcript Excerpt of Sight-C Teleconference; 07/08/17*

**BISHOP:** Are you fucking kidding me?!

**AMITYBILL:** No. You couldn’t BE more wrong, Tom.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** No names.

**AMITYBILL:** Sorry. Bishop.

**BISHOP:** Fucking unbelievable. Do I need to disconnect or something? She said my fucking name!

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** No. It happens, and she didn’t use your full name. We’re secure, okay? And Amity-bill, dial it back please.

**AMITYBILL:** [Exhaling] Fine.

**BISHOP:** I think I should be able to call her by her real name, too.

**AMITYBILL:** Go ahead. It’s Billie. Are you listening, Global Conspiracy, it’s Billie with an I and an E.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Hey! Save that shit for reality television! You both begged me to join this call, so here we are, listening to you two bitch at each other. Either add to the discussion or I’m dropping you from the conference call.

**PH4N4TIC:** Drop them.

**BISHOP:** Whatever. Look, I’m just saying we need a consensus here. Magic isn’t real, and if we start introducing all this hoodoo voodoo bullshit, we’ll never get the facts straight.

**PH4N4TIC:** And if magic isn’t on the table, then we’re ignoring some really big holes in what we know.

**AMITYBILL:** Thank you!

**BISHOP:** But magic isn’t real!

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** It doesn’t matter. The people who practice it believe it’s real—

**BISHOP:** So what?!

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Let me finish! They operate from a set of principles that let them talk to and interact

with ghosts. You can’t debate their success — and they don’t give a shit whether you believe in magic or not. Some things are working for them and until we understand what they are, we can’t dismiss them. Look. I’m entirely agnostic about this whole magic, supernatural thing, but I’ve seen enough shit to question every one of my beliefs three times over.

**AMITYBILL:** Show of hands. Who thinks everything should be on the table, including magic and religion. Me.

**PH4N4TIC:** Absolutely.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** [Sigh] Same. Doesn’t mean I believe it’s true, but we already put it on the table so let’s leave it on the table.

**BISHOP:** I want to keep the superstition out of this.

**ESTEVEES:** Yeah. Me too.

[PAUSE]

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Not that this was ever about a consensus, but Helldiver. You’ve been quiet.

**HELLDIVER:** I’ve been quiet because none of you have said shit worth listening to. And Fox is right, this isn’t a consensus. If you don’t like shit fucking up your worldview, then you were born in the wrong fucking world. Now harden the fuck up, because if you get beheaded or gutted or just plain vanished, you’ve got nobody else to blame but yourself. And maybe you don’t believe in magic, but some things out there will T-bone you right in the ass. Fox? Can we stop pretending this is a goddamn democracy and get moving on this shit. Forged in Fire is coming on later and I sure as fuck am watching it.

**PH4N4TIC:** A-fucking-men. Did you see that episode where one bladesmith actually put a Hunter’s glyph on his— ?

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Let’s not derail here. I’ll go first, and please, save your comments till the end? I’m sharing snippets of a conversation I had with my source. Go ahead and read through it while I grab a Coke.

[4TH\_FOX\_SISTER WANTS TO  
SHARE A DOCUMENT WITH YOU.]

## Vampires & Necromancy

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** I get that you don’t trust these Giovanni, but this is sounding really personal.



**ANONYMOUS:** I'm not going to lie, it's as personal as it gets. The Giovanni are an old family from Venice, and when I say old, I mean they've got commissioned paintings from Bellini and Titian hanging in their homes. They were bankers before banking became a thing, when they were still called "merchant families," and if anyone is elbows deep in the ghost trade, it's them. They've been enslaving and using ghosts for centuries, creating a system of indentured servants and prisoners. They're modern day slave traders preying on ghosts.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Then how come I've never heard of them?

**ANONYMOUS:** Come on, Fox Sister. Think. This isn't the kind of shit you can find on Wikipedia. Conspiracies come together when everyone has something to lose. The Giovanni built their legacy on the bones of their rivals and on principles of silence that make the Cosa Nostra look like tent-show revivalists. The reason you never heard of them is because the Giovanni go by other family names these days, like the Dunsirn, the Milliners, and the della Passaglia, but behind closed doors, it's all under the Giovanni brand.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** I've heard of the Milliners.

**ANONYMOUS:** Right, and if you do your research, you'll know that the Dunsirn and those other families aren't people you fuck with either. The Dunsirns own Britain the same way you own a pair of underwear, and the Milliners have more Kennedy skeletons in their closet than the Kennedys have in their own mausoleums. Go to Africa, go to Asia, go to the fucking Arctic and the Giovanni have a gnarled root from the old family tree growing there. They've turned marrying for power and influence into an assembly line.

On camera, each family is a mover and shaker with enough money to back presidential campaigns and enough lawyers to sue Christ for slandering the Romans. There's nothing public to link them with ghosts or cabals because dead men don't talk, and any lingering spirits are too scared to talk out of turn. Behind closed doors, though, you start getting into all the really shady and nasty shit. We're talking Kubrick territory here.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Clockwork Orange Kubrick or The Shining?

**ANONYMOUS:** *The Shining* meets *Eyes Wide Shut*. Behind closed doors, the family competes with English royalty when it comes to incest and inbreeding.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Ew!

**ANONYMOUS:** No, none of that shit. You're talking about people who can make your eyes bleed with a thought, and don't give me this "I don't believe in magic" bullshit. With or without spells, these people will slit your throat in broad daylight and never see the inside of a courtroom, much less a police car. They've stayed hidden because the inbreeding keeps all that money and influence internal. They've got too many dark deeds under the hood for anyone to believe you if you went public. Look, ever wonder why we don't see any new Hitlers in the world? It's because they changed their names to distance themselves for Das Mass Murderer, but that doesn't mean that Hitler's family isn't still alive and well.

Oh, and when genetic stagnation rears its head, the Giovanni don't marry new blood either; they buy out an entire family with power and influence, and make the filthy rich even filthier. It extends their influence and reduces the odds of flipper babies.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** LOL! Okay, but where does the necromancy come in?

**ANONYMOUS:** That's the bit I'm unclear on, but I think it's in their roots, around the time the Renaissance was screwing the Church by putting old Greek and Roman texts in the hands of anyone who could read. Now, it's nice imagining that the merchant families of Venice were doing this out of the kindness of their hearts, but many like the Giovanni probably kept the really juicy shit for themselves. That's what I'd be doing. I'm talking forbidden tomes and evil artifacts and forgotten places of power. In the Giovanni's case, they built the backbone of their necromancy during the Renaissance, if you believe the old illustrations I got a look at.

Whether you believe in the shit or not, it doesn't matter. At the very least, you don't need to believe in Allah to be scared of the extremist who thinks he's got a direct hotline to the big man. Same thing with the Giovanni. If you're not going to respect their skills as necromancers, respect their dedication to the bit.

At the very least, the Giovanni have 500+ years communing with ghosts and understanding what makes them tick. They know ghosts, they know the game. They know how to bargain and how to force them into compliance, and they were doing it without all the modern technology that we have helping us now. Don't you think that means they have more tricks up their sleeves than we're comfortable admitting to?



**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** So you believe in their power? In necromancy?

**ANONYMOUS:** I do, reluctantly. It sticks in my beak, saying that, but I do. I came into this thing a rational woman and now, I just don't know anymore. I've seen too much wild shit to discount it, and yeah...I've seen the Giovanni work, and that one time was enough to account for half the white hairs on my head. When you talk about evil, they are the real fucking bona fide deal. The Giovanni have been dancing with the dead for so long that there's little they consider sacred and there's little human left in them.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Okay. So ghosts are like, what? Slaves to them?

**ANONYMOUS:** Slaves, bodyguards, bargaining chips, assassins, tools...whatever they need. And no, generally they don't ask permission. They take, and the ghosts are the victims here. See, necromancy isn't just one way of dealing with the dead, but a ton of different ways. They can summon and enslave a ghost and they can animate corpses. They can look into the land of the dead and...fuck, even I don't know how to separate fact from fiction here.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Just say it.

**ANONYMOUS:** My sources say that the Giovanni can cause things to decay and wither, and that they can hurt ghosts...I mean literally strike them. They can even make themselves stronger and more powerful. I laughed at the idea at first, but I saw some pictures of Giovanni from eighty years ago and now. It was the same people in both pictures, and I mean down to the fucking moles. So now I'm thinking that the Giovanni use their necromancy to live for a really long time, and that fucking terrifies me because if I ever piss them off or they ever learn what I know about them...killing me won't be the end of it. They can kill me, animate my corpse to kill my parents, and turn my ghost into their slave.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** This all sounds above my pay grade, if you get me? These Giovanni move in circles me or other ghost hunters will probably never see, so what's with trying to put the fear of God in me?

**ANONYMOUS:** It's a fair question, but there're a few things to keep in mind about the Giovanni if you're getting into the ghost hunting business. For a long time, the Giovanni considered ghosts to be their thing, their monopoly, and there weren't many people around to put that to the test. It means they're territorial.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** We're not touching their profit margin or whatever.

**ANONYMOUS:** No, but they don't know that, and they don't care that they don't know either. You're a

threat in the making. They've got their truths and that's all that matters. Maybe they're just waiting for you to prove them right, but I can honestly see several reasons why the Giovanni are interested in you.

At best, you might be a bellwether of sorts. Why would they do the legwork in finding ghosts or places of spirit activity when they can tap your phones and hack your investigations?

Or maybe they'll use you to flush out the dead. Ghosts are scared of them and likelier to hide, but they won't hide from you, right? So the Giovanni might use you to go rooting out the ghosts who are hidden, making it easier for them to poach.

Then there're the more dangerous possibilities. That you've come across someplace the Giovanni are protecting, or are interested in. Maybe it's an execution site, where the ghosts there are responsible for claiming the spirits of the murdered. Or maybe they're protecting something or someone significant on this or that side of the living and the dead. In that case, you're less trouble dead than alive, and if the ghosts don't kill you before you make it out, the Giovanni will hunt you down to your front door.

If you're going to deal with ghosts and with putting them at rest, remember this. You are potentially fucking with someone's "livelihood." Do your research. Don't go into a haunting without knowing who on the living side owns or controls that location. And if it turns out to be a shell company within a shell company, or somebody who is 1% rich with a lot of political connections? Fucking run because there's a good chance you're about to cross swords with a Giovanni interest.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** I appreciate all this, but I did a semester of journalism in university and the first thing my prof beat into us was getting an independent source to back up any claims.

**ANONYMOUS:** You want your second source? When you talk to the dead, ask them who on this side of the Shroud scares them. Ask them what goes bump in the night for them, and I promise you, the name Giovanni will come up time and time again.

## Last Thoughts and Other Clans

**AMITYBILL:** Holy fucking shit. Is she on the level?

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** She hasn't steered me wrong so far. We worked a haunting together out in Crown Point, Indiana and she saved my ass a couple of times. She knows her shit. I also reached out to some other investigators and we tried something. In five cold spots, we started throwing around the word "Giovanni." No reaction in three of them, but one place went from high EVP and magnetometer readings to absolute zero activity at the name. The other spot went full psychokinetic,



forcing the investigators out.

**BISHOP:** That's qualitative, not quantitative.

**ESTEVE:** I hate to say it, but you're in the wrong business if you're waiting for peer reviewed proof.

**BISHOP:** You said you wanted proof too!

**ESTEVE:** Yeah, but...I kinda approach it like Marconi and the radio telegraph. He didn't know why raising the antenna on a radio would boost the signal so much when everyone else thought that it would only extend the range by the height of the antenna, but he had a hunch and it worked. We got the first cross-Atlantic wireless telegraph from it. Science eventually caught up to Marconi and I think that's what we're waiting for...for science to catch up to us.

**PH4N4TIC:** Bishop, the problem with quantitative is that even operations like Orpheus sprinkle their literature with tech hoodoo and new-age science to make their figures add up. But I promise you this...even they're reverse engineering their discoveries to figure out the why.

**ESTEVE:** Speaking of hoodoo, I've...got a question.

**BISHOP:** Are you sure? You don't seem sure.

**ESTEVE:** Yeah, okay...look, I was in Haiti back in 2010, after the big quake. I was helping out and got to know some of the locals. I was hearing some pretty strange crap from the other relief workers, but then I started seeing it too.

**AMITYBILL:** Seeing what?

**ESTEVE:** Finding bodies all dried up, and catching glimpses of people that looked like they were...decomposing. I just figured it was cholera — it got pretty bad for a couple years over there — but I started asking questions and— well, friends started telling me to keep my mouth shut, that the ghosts were listening, that...I don't know. I pissed off the wrong people.

**HELLDIVER:** What people?

**ESTEVE:** That's the thing I wanted to ask Fox about. Could these Giovanni be in Haiti? I mean, I was hearing similar crap about these guys over there...powerful families who could talk to ghosts and turn people into — fuck, this is ridiculous — zombies.

**PH4N4TIC:** Are you saying Voodoo?

**ESTEVE:** Yeah, I guess. They called them hounsans, but these guys were part priests and part crime lords. And I was told they looked like corpses.

**HELLDIVER:** There's no money in Haiti, so it doesn't sound Giovanni. But I've been hearing about turf wars in the Caribbean, between African followers of a serpent god named Damballah-Wedo and followers of Vodou.

**BISHOP:** You "heard" about it? How the fuck are you people getting your information?

**HELLDIVER:** Yes, motherfucker, I heard about it because I have friends deep in the know and my friends say that ghosts are getting used.

**ESTEVE:** Everyone chill please, okay? The takeaway here is that following the quake, a lot of Haitians immigrated to countries like Brazil and Canada, and some into the U.S. The people I pissed off, these hounsans, they're hiding in the Haitian communities and people are afraid of them. That means if you're dealing with any hauntings in the Caribbean communities—

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** —then we might be running into one of these hounsans.

**ESTEVE:** Or an uncooperative community that might react to our presence out of fear.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Okay, good to know, thanks Esteves.

**AMITYBILL:** I think Sister has the right attitude. Listen to everything so nothing surprises you. And I want to go next. I've been sitting on this and I really really want to get this out before I scream!

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** [Laughing] Okay, Amitybill. What do you have for us?

**AMITYBILL:** A transcript! You know my contact? Doesn't matter. After my miserable cum-stain of a husband died and started shitting on me in the afterlife, I contacted Fish Paranormal Services to help me get rid of the asshole. Andrew helped me out a lot, and he still looks after me after I started going solo.

**PH4N4TIC:** Andrew and Sophia are good people. They've been helping out a lot of us.

**AMITYBILL:** Anyhoo, Andrew sends stuff my way from time to time if I throw him some business too. So he sends me a transcript from a hacked computer cam that someone sold him. It's got some really juicy stuff.

**HELLDIVER:** Are you sure it's the real deal?

**AMITYBILL:** Hells to the yes! Andrew's never steered me wrong and he showed me the footage.



## Werewolves and Spectres

**MIKE:** These are from the Third Dynasty...you shouldn't have these! They need to be in a— a museum...the Cairo Museum of Antiquities or something, not in your private collection!

**NOELLE:** Mike, these relics are exactly where they need to be. I hand them over to some museum, there's going to be a lot of dead security guards and tourists. It's bad for tourism.

**MIKE:** Are— are those sealed canopic jars? Whose are they?!

**NOELLE:** Uh, Djoseret Nebti, I think? But you're missing the point.

**MIKE:** She was a Strider, Noelle, one of US. I've been hearing stories about her since I was a cub! We howl her name during the ancestral moot, for Gaia's sake!

**NOELLE:** There's enough of you in one place to throw a moot? Sorry, couldn't resist. Look, the artifacts themselves are incidental, and whatever they meant to someone once upon a time, no offense, isn't as important as what they are now.

**MIKE:** And what are they?

**NOELLE:** A liability. Take a sec. Tell me what you see.

**MIKE:** Well, I see artifacts from the Third and Fourth Dynas—

**NOELLE:** Go deeper. I know you have Duat's eyes.

**MIKE:** [Sigh] I see...hmm. These things are nearly embedded in the Shroud. I'm seeing serious spiritual decay. They belong to ghosts?

**NOELLE:** Worse. Defilers.

**MIKE:** That's— not possible. They can't have mortal ties, not like ghosts. These things dance with the Black Spirals...they've surrendered anything and everything that made them human.

**NOELLE:** And yet, here they are. I had to use every trick in the book to lock them down. Called in a lot of favors too. You should see how many spiders and roaches I've got crawling over those things.

**MIKE:** [Ugh] No thanks. You rely on the Pattern way too much. And if the others knew I was friends with an urrah.

**NOELLE:** Relax. Consider us Frien-D-A'd.

**MIKE:** What?

**NOELLE:** Friend plus NDA? Non-disclosure agree— [Sigh] We're off the record. Nobody knows I invited you. Nobody knows we're friends. You're my dirty little secret and I'm your walk-of-shame.

**MIKE:** Not that I don't love these semi-insulting visits, Noelle, but what exactly am I doing here?

**NOELLE:** Right, you have places to go and people to ignore. I need to learn about these things. Once upon a time, that was your tribe's shtick, right?

**MIKE:** Shtick? You're calling our legacy of caring for the dead in the afterlife a "shtick?"

**NOELLE:** If it wasn't, you'd still be doing it instead of being the Garou's FedEx service.

**MIKE:** I'm done, I'm leaving.

**NOELLE:** Nono, I'm sorry. I went over the line with that one. Please, stay. I need your help. Please. Pleeesease? I have more Egyptian relics like those ones, only, less haunted? I'll give you some if you stay...Mike? Mike?

**MIKE:** Fine! But first...where did you get them?

## Auctions & Hauntings

**NOELLE:** So, you know how much I love the auction circuit, right? Auction houses, police auctions, storage unit auctions, mystery auctions...[laughing] my God, mystery auctions are sooo fucking dangerous.

**MIKE:** Noelle, addiction notwithstanding, focus please.

**NOELLE:** Right. Imagine being a hipster and a Glass Walker. I'm so confused.

**MIKE:** Noelle!

**NOELLE:** All right, all right. So, once I got to know more about the local players, I started hearing all the after-hours chatter, the industry gossip. Several auction-goers ended up with properties or antiques that still had ghostly ties.

**MIKE:** So, they started getting haunted.

**NOELLE:** Hauntings started springing up in places without that kind of history or violence. And even worse with the mystery auction circle.

**MIKE:** So, I'm guessing you bid on something without knowing what it is, because...?

**NOELLE:** I think it started on eBay when you wanted to sell things that weren't worth a separate auction, so you threw it all together in a box and sold that. People did it for cheap thrills. I was part of this bored millionaires club where members paid 20K and up for mystery





"Grim Boxes."

**MIKE:** Grim boxes?

**NOELLE:** Yeah, macabre stuff, like crime-scene photos and murder weapons probably stolen from some lock-up, or a mounted animal chimera where the taxidermist transformed a dead animal to look like something mythical. Even antiques stolen from Iraq when the museums got looted started showing up. The stranger and more illegal it was, the more people loved it. Well, one of my contacts received this small Egyptian scarab that turned out to be really old, really authentic, and really haunted. Next thing he knows, he's standing over his neighbor's dead body, licking the knife edge first as the police bust in. State's still trying to decide if he gets the needle or not.

**MIKE:** Wait, the Sapinski Case? That's your friend?

**NOELLE:** Yup. He got possessed by a Defiler I think. So, he reaches out to me because nobody else would believe him, and I rode the signal back to the Grim Box auctioneer. And let me tell you, bouncing around through IP addresses is never fun. It's like a rollercoaster with zero shock absorbers and tons of static electricity. That's where I found all this crap.

**MIKE:** And the auctioneer? You dealt with him?

**NOELLE:** I dealt with one of them, grabbed whatever I could, and then ran like hell, because the Russian Mob is surprisingly prepared for us.

**MIKE:** Yeah. I've had a few encounters with the Israeli mafia running drugs through Morocco and they seemed...able. So, let me guess? This was a new way to get rid of merchandise or evidence?

**NOELLE:** Or it started as a money-laundering scheme with stolen goods, but the Grim Boxes took off. They are THE hot commodity among the bored and idly rich, and customers are demanding more and more bizarre things.

**MIKE:** They can't all be cursed, the Grim Box auctions I mean.

**NOELLE:** No, but it's not just them. I'm hearing too many stories through the legal auctions too about people getting things they shouldn't have in the first place. And then you tell people that the item up for bid is haunted? People eat that shit up. Hotels and B&Bs that claim to be haunted will buy it hoping they'll have more talking points or end up attracting one of those ghost-hunting shows to cover them.

**MIKE:** They have those?! That's incredibly dangerous.



**NOELLE:** Welcome to the 21st century. Everything is on display and one click away from home delivery.

**MIKE:** Noelle, the Silent Striders are armed for these kinds of situations. We can communicate with ghosts and we know how to fight them. Some of us can even travel into the Deepest Umbra, and even then a ghost remains dangerous. And now humans are venturing into places they shouldn't, or toying with the anchors of Defilers? Those are agents of the Wyrms, these items are Wyrms-tainted. If all of this is haunted, leave it with me. The Striders can take it from here.

## Human Curiosity and Ghosts

**NOELLE:** That's the problem...you can't.

**MIKE:** Excuse me?

**NOELLE:** You can't. The Glass Walkers have been.

**MIKE:** You have technology buttoned down, there's no doubt about it, but you're stuck in the Weaver's web and still calling it home. The city's broken you, turned you into its house pet, and now you want to tell us about ghosts when we've been bringing them to face the judgment of Ma'at for millennia?

**NOELLE:** Where the fuck do you think the ghosts are, Mike? Who do you think Defilers are fucking with? When it comes to ghosts, whatever is on that side of Shroud stays on that side, or at least it should. That's your domain, no argument, but the ones that are here... they're among the humans, in the cities, in the towns, in all the places that the Weaver inspired. And that's the problem. Maybe the Silent Striders stopped ghosts from interfering with the living, but it was never about the humans, was it? It has always been about everything in its proper place for you and the others.

**MIKE:** And what's wrong with that? Look at what happened when everything got unbalanced. Chaos and corruption to the left of us and stagnation to the right as more and more humans stamp out the Wyld. Now you're all playing with forces you barely understand and you're enabling the humans instead of scaring them off. They're toddlers and you're giving them a loaded gun for a pacifier!

**NOELLE:** You're still not getting it. Your tribe has no clue how to navigate this new human society well enough to deal with ghosts or Defilers. You wander around, cleaning up the droplets, while we urrah? We're tracking the storm. You can't begin to see the turbulence ahead of you until you're in it. Would you have spotted the Grim Box auctions if I hadn't told you about them?

**MIKE:** No. Doesn't mean you know shit about handling ghosts.

**NOELLE:** Of course I don't know how to handle them! That's why I called you in. I need your help handling these Defilers and you need my help tracking them down. It's called a win-win.

**MIKE:** [Sigh] Not sure I see any sort of win here, Noelle.

**NOELLE:** That's the ugly truth about compromise, isn't it? Nobody walks away entirely happy. Look, you have to face the facts. Humanity abandoned many of its old fears and rituals. They're steering headlong into danger because they're getting lost in the crowd and yearning for something new, something to stimulate them. And in the absence of the old rituals to connect them to society, they've found new ways to build societies online and to hammer out new rites of passage.

**MIKE:** I get that, I really do. It's the one part of humanity that I actually understand, though I think they're selling their soul to the Weaver and the Wyrms, and it's costing all of us.

**NOELLE:** Maybe, but if you ignore their ingenuity, their thirst, their ability to work together, it'll cost you more. Nowadays, humans hear the word "ghost" and they flock straight to the danger, for the thrill of experiencing something unique and bragging about it to the rest of the herd. Social media, Mike...you wouldn't believe what you can learn there.

**MIKE:** How is it people have run-ins with ghosts and don't go crazy or forget what they saw anymore?

**NOELLE:** Ghosts are pretty much the last bit of the supernatural that humans believe in because they want to believe that there's something of themselves that lives on past death. They want science to rationalize the afterlife. Defilers understand that, and they're cunning. Look at these relics. What if this was deliberate?

**MIKE:** You mean what if a Defiler was using old anchors to hurt people? They can't be that smart.

**NOELLE:** You tell me? Ten minutes ago, you didn't think Defilers could have anchors. And maybe it's not them.

**MIKE:** Well, Defilers do live in the twisting maze of Malfeas, so maybe it's one of the Banes directing them? Or the Black Spiral Dancers?

**NOELLE:** Or maybe they are that smart and we've been underestimating them this whole time. Either way, these anchors here can be passed around, weakening the Shroud in a location and allowing Defilers or ghosts to fuck with whoever has them. Then an item starts developing a reputation, and its value goes up. You know that scarab that Sapinski got through the Grim Box auction? It's already missing. I looked.



**MIKE:** Fuck. There has to be something you can do to make them more aware, to make them...?

**NOELLE:** Scared? Mike...

## Garou and Fear

**NOELLE:** ...scaring the humans is part of the reason why we're in this mess. Nothing stays scared forever. Eventually, it lashes out. The last time we pushed and terrified the humans, they learned to turn silver against us.

**MIKE:** Yeah, and then we let them grow unchecked, and look at where that got us.

**NOELLE:** No no no, don't play the victim card. We have a hand in all this ghost crap.

**MIKE:** How're we responsible for all that—

**NOELLE:** Not all, Mike. But we added to the tally of dead bodies, didn't we? How many did we slaughter during the Impergium? Enough to affect the collective unconscious of a whole race...let that sink in. So when we go full aggro around them, they're alive long enough to go insane with fear. Do you really think someone goes peacefully into the hereafter when we're around? Nope...right off the edge of sanity at the moment of death, and straight into the Deep Umbra.

**MIKE:** We are barely a drop in the bucket of that whole mess. It's unfair putting the blame on us.

**NOELLE:** And it's bullshit to absolve ourselves, or worse, feel justified for how we treated humans — how we're still treating them. Take this shit with the ghosts... knowing what you know now...would you still try to scare humans away from ghosts?

**MIKE:** Fuck, absolutely. Ghosts are an abomination to the Triat. They're victims, yes, but their existence creates more victims. They are bottles of unchecked emotions, and they're selfish. They'll pull you down just to stop themselves from drowning. Ghosts and the underworld they live in are part of the same swamp, and every person who gets mired in the swamp adds to its misery.

**NOELLE:** I get it, and add that to the fact that they're likelier to succumb to the Wyrms and become Defilers? Ghosts are ticking timebombs. But you can't stop the humans from going after them and you can't scare them away. So...help me deal with these Defiler anchors and find ways to save people from them. But let us help. The Glass Walkers understand humans as well as you get ghosts. We know where to look and how to find the trouble spots faster. So why not pool our resources together and work together? Show the rest of them how it's down.

**MIKE:** Fuck...the Red Talons are going to love this.

**NOELLE:** That's a yes? Awesome! C'mon, let's go out and get something to eat and we can talk about what comes next. I'm starving.

**MIKE:** And buying.

**NOELLE:** And buying. There's an Arab place near here that serves this great beef tartar called kibbeh nayeh.

## Last Thoughts

**HELLDIVER:** That's...impressive. I'm surprised Andrew has something like this. Makes me wonder how he got his hands on it. Any chance you can share the video?

**AMITYBILL:** Sorry...Andrew's being real careful about what he sends me, but I can ask. He says werewolves are really scary, and that because we deal with ghosts they may not like it. They might see us as enablers. That's what he said.

**PH4N4TIC:** That— that really fucking pisses me off.

**AMITYBILL:** What? Why?

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Let him talk.

**PH4N4TIC:** It's just, Andrew and Sophia have been warning me about these shapeshifters, about how we have to keep ghosts safe from them.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** It's not like they're the Giovanni.

**PH4N4TIC:** No, but it's, like, total victim blaming bullshit. Ghosts don't get to choose whether they're left behind or not, and these two make it sound like all ghosts are dangerous and selfish.

**ESTEVE:** Isn't that how we should treat them, though? Like they're dangerous?

**PH4N4TIC:** No! I mean, yes, let's be careful and everything, but aren't we here to observe and report and maybe help?

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Sure, but it'd be stupid if we didn't separate the simple hauntings from the really evil stuff out there. How many here have gone on a case and come back home with an unwanted guest?

**ESTEVE:** Yup.

**BISHOP:** Yes.

**AMITYBILL:** Oh yeah, definitely. Andrew's cleaned my house a few times.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** And how many times was it malevolent or angry. [Pause] That's what I thought. We need



to be careful, and yes, maybe these two shapeshifters were applying one brushstroke to all ghosts, but we can't ignore the danger.

**BISHOP:** What about you, Helldiver?

**HELLDIVER:** What about me?

**PH4N4TIC:** Where do you stand on all this?

**HELLDIVER:** [Sigh] Okay, but don't bust my balls here because I'm not in the mood to pander to your worldviews, okay? What the Garou think of ghosts, what the Giovanni think of ghosts...hell, what mages think of ghosts doesn't fucking matter.

**ESTEVES:** Did you say "mages?"

**HELLDIVER:** It doesn't mean shit. They know a lot about ghosts, but what they know and what they do about it is all twisted through their own lenses. You know about the Observer Principle?

**BISHOP:** The person observing a phenomenon changes that phenomenon just by observing it.

**HELLDIVER:** Werewolves are gonna treat anything about ghosts as a hiccup in the machine and anything about "Defilers" like it's related to the Wyrms. As far as they're concerned, we're enablers. Giovanni see ghosts as slaves and part of their profit margin, and anything we do is fucking with their bottom line. As far as they're concerned, we're somewhere between Eco-terrorists and embezzlers.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Well, before we get off topic, I think Fanatic found something interesting if not scary? Fanatic?

**PH4N4TIC:** Yeah...I was doing some work for Orpheus—

**BISHOP:** You work for Orpheus?!

**PH4N4TIC:** Mostly freelance, off-the-books stuff. Don't ask, it's not pretty.

**HELLDIVER:** Stop patting yourself on the back and get to it. Forged in Fire is on in an hour. Chop chop, this better cut.

**PH4N4TIC:** Fine. So because of what I do, I got approached for a meeting with an interested third party. They flew me out to Vegas, got me a suite at the Cosmo, paid for a private catered dinner, and gave me the spiel. Guy thought I was in the know, but I think he was lower on the food chain and looking to eat his way up. He was saying more to impress me, you know? I recorded the conversation, though I wasn't saying much. Douchebro was doing most of the talking like a coked-up LA producer, and he was pretty out there.

## Mages and Economy in the Afterlife

So you want to be rich?

*Sure, who doesn't?*

Beautiful! I can help you with that. All you need is a small lobotomy on that small voice you call a conscience. Now I know what you're thinking: "I already carpet-bombed that bad boy out of existence," but where we're going, there's absolutely no equivocating whatsoever. We're going somewhere your moral compass is going to start spinning around like Linda Blair's head on Satan's dick.

*Okay...*

Now this idea? Gold-fucking-mine. It's a 3D printing press spewing out bitcoins. Now, most of my peeps don't bother with the afterlife because it's bogged down under so much emotional baggage that it looks like a Lifetime movie. Or maybe it was a hot mess of superstitions and reality bleeding all over each other. Either way, we figured it was better to keep it isolated from the more fragile minds of general society.

I'm here to tell you now, that this approach? Totally off the mark. It gave other so-called enlightened an opportunity to spin the entire thing in their favor, BUT, if there's something we're good at, it's keeping up with the times. So you know about the "Enlightened" right?

*Sure. Some stuff. People who can spin-doctor reality, right?*

I fucking LOVE you, man! Spin-doctor reality! There's your come-to-Jesus moment! So who is local competition when it comes to death and the afterlife?

You have your Death Bunnies as I like to call them, and that whole belief that life and death are a part of the same great wheel. Props on that whole life-death-life cycle and reincarnation approach, but I'm calling a failure to launch when it comes to capitalizing on it. They'd prefer to grease the tires so the ride's smoother instead of grabbing the steering wheel and controlling the car. So close, but no golden parachute for you.

Then you have your God Bunnies, yet another afterlife kind of club — and we wonder where participation trophies come from, am I right? Again, though, God Bunnies? Not exactly on the wrong path with this everyone-has-a-place-in-Heaven crap, but failure to execute. You have people lining up to do good deeds and you whiff on the follow-through? Sad AND you made dead Mother Theresa cry.

And then, finally, when it comes to the dead, you have my boys and girls...those wonderful cadets from *Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2th Century*. No, seriously, I love them, but man, they're so fringe they need to take drugs just to right themselves back to normal. I have no idea what they see out there in those other dimensions, but those nasty space cannons they've got aren't doing anything to protect them from the turning-the-pubic-hair-white factor.

So who does that leave to deal with ghosts? Us, and that's where you come in.



*I'm listening. But—*

But, "What does the Syndicate know about ghosts and the Underworld?" You're thinking that this well-dressed son-of-a-bitch knows more about corporate and Six Sigma than the afterlife. And at one time, you'd have been right, but those times are a-changing, and they started changing when Silicon Valley mega-moguls opted out of \$60,000 tailored fitted suits from Kiton in favor of jeans and wrinkled T-shirts. It started when thinking outside the box became the new norm.

*So what is your interest in the Underworld. There's no regulated structure there?*

Wrong. It's there, but not the way we do business. Not normally. The Underworld is where you end up when you have unfinished business, right? And the part called Stygia is under the control of the Hierarchy. Now, you can't build an empire without religion or commerce, and the Hierarchy has both. The religion is a cult of personality based around its founder, Charon, and his administrators with pointy scythes. The commerce of the Hierarchy is based on coins called oboli, and around trade goods forged from souls and spirits.

That's right...the brick and mortar of the Shadowlands is built on the meat of souls. How fucked up is that? Criminals and political thorns can be hammered down into coins or a lampshade.

Now here's the thing: the Hierarchy and us? We're fuckin' sympatico! They want ghosts to stay on their side of the Shroud and so do we. You do know about the Hierarchy, right?

*Sure. The Roman Empire in ghost form. Deathlords rule with an iron fist and they don't get along with the Guilds. So how does staying on your side of the Shroud make for getting rich?*

Simple. The Shroud is like a border, and I want to negotiate trade talks with the Hierarchy.

*What?*

One, it's not like Orpheus hasn't started doing that already. And two, we have a lot more to offer. The Hierarchy understand commerce and trade. They created it out of thin air when there was nothing there, so I know they've got an eye for opportunity. That's what I'm offering. Opportunity.

For starters, we help protect their assets on this side of the Shroud and we help them deal with ghosts that are breaking their laws and hiding in the land of the living. That way, they don't need to keep breaking their own laws to come after criminals.

We buy out haunts, where ghosts like to hide out, and make the veil separating us from them stronger there, or we bulldoze the site with a helping of salt-the-earth. The Shroud grows stronger over time, keeping us safer from Underworld incursions and weakening the Guilds, which is in the Hierarchy's favor and best interests.

We offer security services to safeguard the fetters of powerful ghosts in the Hierarchy, either through a security detail

or safety deposit box, or we buy the property and maintain it. That way, the things that connect them here are safe and they stay anchored.

*And in return?*

Again, for starters, we get protected status in their society. Any member of the Syndicate who ends up in the afterlife doesn't get reaped. We get a position in their command structure, a place to call our own, a pocket full of ghost coins, and a new career trajectory. In return, they get ghosts who know the drill, who are go-team-go one hundred percent, and are trained to land on their feet. We open up the lines of communication more and go on corporate retreats to build trust, you get the idea, all with an eye on building an embassy.

In Phase II of our pilot project, we prove that "you can't take it with you" is no longer the paradigm. We offer select living captains of industry a chance to be on the preferred client list.

*Select how?*

We crunch the numbers and figure out the high-risk power brokers. You know, the kind of alpha-dog personalities who won't move on. They sign on with us and we look out for them, making sure that when they cross over they still have their wealth and status in the afterlife, protected from the ghosts of people they screwed over. They still get their seat on the board. In exchange for that and keeping a percentage of those profits, we give the Hierarchy more resources to build and defend Stygia. Ah, there it is...that look. I knew you were going to give me one of those when I dropped that bomb.

We've already commissioned Void Engineers to research a few things like stable dimensional bridges, materials that won't erode in the vacuum of the Deep Umbra, turning Spectres into building blocks, transporting Relics across the Shroud, that sort of thing; it's only a matter of time till crossing the Gauntlet's as easy as slicing a pie. Once that happens, we can start trading supplies and building outposts and laboratories in places like the Tempest.

*So where do we come in? Because right now, I'm having a real issue seeing the connection with us.*

Ghost hunters? I love you guys. You take scientific procedure and try to apply it to the afterlife. What I'm offering, is boom! Equipment. I mean state-of-the-art juicy gear to help you collect data. And money to finance you. All your data gets fed back to us, and the more you find out about ghosts and who's who, the better position we're in to start the negotiations rolling. You help us identify things like fetters and we show the ghosts how well we can protect them.

*So you need brokers. But why us?*

Because you're new to all this; hell, even Orpheus wants a second crack at erasing its missteps. You've got no baggage or history like all these other groups, we don't have to worry about you freaking out if you see ghost, and if you do freak out...who the fuck is gonna believe you? Look, you've worked with Orpheus and you've done the ghost hunting thing. We



want to hire you and your friends as consultants. You've got no personal history with ghosts and no history with my boys, and we need that clean slate. Think of yourselves as pioneers exploring the frontier...like Lewis and Clark. You map the routes, you meet the natives, you help us navigate the land, you get in on the ground floor of...an opportunity of two lifetimes.

*I need to think about it.*

Fine, but think about it like, pronto. We want people who are self-starters, and nobody started conquering who didn't take chances. Now...how about we head downstairs and I show you where the real Vegas is at?

## Last Thoughts

**BISHOP:** So what did you say? About signing up, I mean.

**PH4N4TIC:** I said yes.

**AMITYBILL:** What? How could you!

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** The guy's totally skeevey.

**PH4N4TIC:** I know, but hold up. His equipment is solid and I want to figure out what his angle is.

**ESTEVEES:** Angle?

**HELLDIVER:** Angle. Guys like that don't show all their cards. They want to control, dominate, own. I guarantee you there's a Phase IV and V in there too. Watch your back, Fanatic.

**PH4N4TIC:** Yeah, definitely.

**BISHOP:** Confession time. I wasn't following half the crap that guy was saying. I mean, I didn't understand half the shit he said.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** That's why we're here. This group exists to pool data and understand what's going on out there. Most ghost hunters have no clue what's waiting for them and it's up to us to figure things out and share what we know.

**AMITYBILL:** Why don't we take everything we've collected and just put it out there? Let people decide for—

**PH4N4TIC:** Whoa, fuck no! I have a job to protect. And family.

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** And contacts who trusted us with this information. No, absolutely not. Besides, with everything we've been talking about, we'll do more damage to our credibility. All we can do is watch out for each other and other ghost hunters. Speaking of which...Hell-diver? Want to talk to us about ghosts?

**HELLDIVER:** Sure. You want to know about ghost hunting, then you need to know about ghosts or, as they're really known, wraiths, and what makes them tick. So listen up because I'm not taking shit from someone who knows less than me.

## Being a Wraith

We think we understand ghosts, but we have no fucking clue. We're not even close except in one respect: wraiths stay behind because they have unfinished business, and being tied to the living sucks. Beyond that, the world of the afterlife is like a scum-covered pond — you only see the surface, and what's below that is dark and murky.

You need to understand that. You need to hold on to the knowledge that because their world, the Underworld, is twisted and fucked up, it fucks the wraith up as well. Now the good news is, we only see ghosts when they're closest to the barrier that keeps them from going and coming and fucking with the living so easily. Where the barrier is thickest, wraiths have a hard time pushing through and making a shitshow of things. Where it's thinner, you'll have your cold spots where people experience something spooky. Problem is, these places carry a loaded history; lots of bad history adds up to ghosts who can reach through and do us harm.

## Layers of the Onion

When we see and interact with ghosts, they exist in this parallel place. It's a mirror of our world, but more twisted and confusing and forbidding. Everything is twisted off its axis, so the streets are all the same, but they aren't straight. There's a melted quality to everything, like it was all wax and someone lit the wick. Now, I know what you're wondering. If this place is a mirror of our world, why isn't it the same? I think, and this is me pulling shit out of my ass, that this here Earth sits on principles we understand. The Earth has a crust and a mantle and a core and liquids and solids and everything else that makes shit the way it is. That forms a solid basis for reason.

On the ghost side of things, the mirror world is like skin that sits on top of this moving, fluid storm. It's a massive storm, I mean so huge that the reflected world is like a piece of driftwood on its surface. Below that driftwood, the storm rages like an F5 tornado fucked a Category 5 hurricane during a 10.0 earthquake.

Inside the storm there're stable islands where ghosts build and rule their own empires, and below that, in the heart of the storm, is this all-devouring nothingness at the center of an enormous maze. These places are spots you'll never see, or I hope you never do. But you need to know about them, because these islands are home to the Hierarchy and some powerful fucking ghosts, and in the maze are the twisted monsters called Spectres...the same ones we've been talking about, and these fuckers will eat the faces off babies.



## The Hierarchy

The Hierarchy rules over ghosts, and it's an iron fist deal. They're much like the Roman Empire at its height. Hell, they pretty much date back to the same time, and every nasty turn of history that humanity had to live down got reflected on their side too.

Hierarchy society is divvied up among the Deathlords, and if you're a ghost, depending on how you died, you serve one of the Deathlords. And then there're the Guilds, which are kinda like unions or tradespeople, but not exactly. They're divided up according to their powers as ghosts. So if you've got an aptitude for throwing shit around, well then, you're in one group and angry at shit all the time. If you can change your face, well, you're one of the spies, and a damn good one.

Now, the Hierarchy is happy to stick to their part of the Underworld and never bother our part of town, but that's where it gets tricky. The Hierarchy and Guilds butt heads. The Guilds got uppity and tried to overthrow the Hierarchy, but the Hierarchy bit back hard. Now, some Guilds are still kosher, and some aren't, but the real sticking point is this one law that boils down to this: Don't cross the Shroud, don't fuck with the living.

The Hierarchy doesn't want to get involved with us. They want to stay on their side of the mirror, but all these ghosts keep breaking the law. Every time a ghost says "boo" or flutters your skirt or spikes your EVP meter, that means they're

reaching over the table and breaking Hierarchy law.

Think about it. Have you wondered why ghosts suddenly vanish after intense activity, or why it feels like you're caught in the middle of a fight? That means you found yourself in a brouhaha between Hierarchy wraiths and lawbreakers.

Now here's the thing. The Hierarchy is everywhere. Yeah, sure, they rule from their islands, but every city is an outpost and every outpost a colony of the Hierarchy, or that's what they'd like to think. That means that every city has its rulers and enforcers, so if you're about to investigate some place with a long and colorful history, prepare to be disappointed. If you've read it in a book, then the Hierarchy has eyes on it or has cleaned it out or — and this is the one you don't want to think about — they can't do anything about that spot because it's got Spectres, which makes it very very bad news for you.

## The Spectres

If the Hierarchy is the Roman Empire, then the Spectres are the barbarians at the gate. In that thing Abbie shared with us, it talks about Spectres and what you can expect from them when they poke the Shroud, but in the Underworld, they are fucking legion. That giant maze that surrounds the Big End? That's their home, and worse...every ghost you deal with has a little bit of Spectre in them. Dying does a number on you, and as a ghost, you come back with two personalities: the original you, and a nasty piece of your worst self.





Every ghost has a chance to be mean and ugly because of that voice in their head, and if they're mean and ugly too many times, that little bit takes over. Sometimes its temporary, but most times, it's eventually forever. All Spectres are ghosts and all Spectres are serial killers looking to spread as much misery as possible. That's why sometimes a haunting can go all Amityville on you. That's why sometimes you get followed back home or your family end up skinning each other alive.

The other problem with that bad seed is that you never know when it's going to pop up. The bad seed will always try to bully the wraith to work against its own best interests, even if it's helping itself. It wants the ghost to destroy whatever anchors it to this world, because once it's cut loose, it can go screaming into that great big nothing and make it even bigger.

## Types of Wraiths

So, when you're dealing with a haunting, you need to recognize your rarer ghost from your more common echo. Echoes are the amoebas of the afterlife. They're stuck orbiting the tragedy that got them killed and orbiting that thing that anchors them here. Problem with them is that you can't negotiate with them or get them to answer questions, but they will react if you try to break them out of their routine, and I mean react in a bad way. These types of ghosts run like tape loops, and are probably the most common thing you'll encounter.

Other wraiths, though, are easier to bargain with and talk to, but that also means, like anyone else, they've got their own agendas. Now, as I've said, most ghosts you meet are a pain in the side of the Hierarchy, and if you're interacting with them, it means you're probably dealing with a ghost that belongs to a Guild, an outlaw.

My understanding is that the Hierarchy still uses some Guilds since their powers don't involve reaching across the Shroud, but the ones you have to watch out for can definitely fuck up your day. Some ghosts can appear and attack you physically, or do all the classic shit like make the walls bleed and surround you with insects. Other fuckers can ride you like a petting zoo pony, or throw a poltergeist tantrum like nobody's business.

Good news is that if you're dealing with a Guild wraith, you've got a shot at striking a bargain or threatening its anchor to get it to back off. But watch out; ghosts aren't chained to a location, not unless they're drones. That means you piss off a wraith and you may be getting a house call.

## What Keeps You Here

Having unfinished business isn't a guarantee that you'll stick around after death, but every ghost who plagues the living and breathing does have unfinished business. Whatever keeps you anchored is a big fucking deal to you, and it can be a person, place, or thing. And yeah, that thing can be a house. The Spectre in each wraith wants that anchor gone, and the wraith will do everything to protect it. If a wraith loses its

anchor, it goes bye-bye, into the pit of the stomach of that great big nothing.

An anchor is what grounds a wraith, what connects it to this world. They'll do anything to protect it and stick near it. You fuck with that, and you've got problems. That's why research is so fucking important. Know what you're walking into. Understand who the ghost is, and what the location and everything there mean to them. That way, you won't screw up by stomping all over their sacred ground. As the kids are fond of saying now, check your privilege.

## Last Thoughts

**HELLDIVER:** Okay, that's it. Forged in Fire is coming on.

**PH4N4TIC:** Fuck yeah. I'm there with you. Thanks Fox Sister.

**BISHOP:** Wait, I've got a ton of questions.

**HELLDIVER:** Nope. Forged in Fire or I will kill.

[HELLDIVER HAS LEFT THE CALL]

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** Next time. Thanks everyone, this was a great confab.

[PH4N4TIC HAS LEFT THE CALL]

**AMITYBILL:** Definitely! Count me in for the next one. Can I at least tell Andrew over at Fish Paranormal Services what we talked about?

[ESTEVEZ HAS LEFT THE CALL]

**4th\_FOX\_SISTER:** No, not yet. Let us vet him and his wife first, okay? There's a lot of trust that needs to happen first.

**AMITYBILL:** Fine. I won't say anything. Later.

[AMITYBILL HAS LEFT THE CALL]

[4TH\_FOX\_SISTER HAS LEFT THE CALL]

[GUEST HAS LEFT THE CALL]

**BISHOP:** What the — ?

## Changelings and Epilogue

I'm embedded with the ghost hunters for now, though I may need to pull back on the act. The Bishop routine may be enough to tease secrets from the more easily manipulated members within the group, but hunters like Helldiver know far more than they're letting on and I suspect he might be something supernatural. And then that Guest bit freaked me



out. Was that you?

*Such good guesses, such clever guesses, but alas and alack, no. You have worms in the apple. Your group is indeed compromised.*

Damn. I thought it was strange they knew so much.

*They're being guided; nurtured by some, used by others.*

Am— I being used?

*By me? Such dreadful thoughts, worthy of perishing alone and cold. We are allies. We clasped hands. I am Oathbonded to you.*

I'm sorry. I'm scared, I think.

*Fear isn't unreasonable, but you were saying?*

Well, for a young and disorganized group of people, they've collected a huge amount of data about wraiths and the groups that truck with them, far more intel than I would have expected. The only saving grace is that they're likelier to ignore anything outright magical thanks to the fictionalizing of the supernatural. I warned you this was going to happen, though, didn't I? Fucking millennials—

*Language. Words carry ripples in the Dreaming, and there are some ponds you don't want to stir.*

Sorry. I meant to say that millennials cooperate and share resources like nobody's business and the internet is their friend. It's their superpower. Far too much raw data has been dumped or blindly converted to PDF to keep so many conspiracies and plates spinning. It's an electronic dumpster-diver's dream, and our only hope is that if silence is no longer our ally, then noise will be. I'm hoping there's enough bad intel out there to keep them guessing.

*Bad knowledge serves no one.*

Isn't that why I'm keeping an eye on them?

*Goodness, no. They fascinate me. They fascinate all Sluagh. Such devotion to knowledge, but...they aren't picky eaters are they? Such a Redcap's appetite. No, it's not fear that has us curious. We are worried for them, worried they might get a stomach ache. Tell me more, please.*

Okay. They're only interested in being glorified Houdinis — finding proof of the afterlife or disproving the charla-

tans. If we start treating them like the enemy, it'll backfire.

*How so?*

Many of them are internet personalities within the community, and neutralizing them will only feed the conspiracy machine, validate some suspicions, and draw more viewers to their channels.

*So delightful that they'd share such knowledge freely. No, they are no enemy of ours. For outsiders, they are such a...refreshing delight. We will help. Not directly, but gladly.*

So, what do I do?

*Keep watch. While you study the Restless Dead, other monsters study you from the shadows.*

Like Fish Paranormal Services? I had to bite my tongue when they started talking about Andrew and Sophia right after they just finished talking about the Giovanni. They're a Rosselini front, right? Are they vampires?

*No. They are buried halfway in the soil between undead and alive, and yet worm meal all the same.*

So the Giovanni are going to come after the ghost hunters.

*No, I think not, dear friend. The whispers say the Rosselini are readying themselves to break away from the Giovanni. They are tired of serving them. They are tired of having their appetite for flesh and the torture of the Restless Dead curtailed. And they may have learned all they can about Necromancy. The Giovanni's servants, I think, are filing their teeth for war.*

And they're going to use ghost hunters to find ghosts to serve them. That's why they're helping us. Thanks...that's all I have for now. Was there anything else?

*Be careful, dearest friend. The Restless Dead are hungry creatures that crave emotion, but they swim in waters beneath the oceans themselves. And you do know what happens when you stare into such a deep abyss.*

It stares back into you.

*No. You fall in and are gobbled up! Like that. If that happens, we will be helpless to do anything but mourn your loss....*







# Ghost-Hunting Organizations

Monsters are real, and ghosts are real too.  
They live inside us, and sometimes, they win.  
– Stephen King, *The Shining*, Introduction (2001)

Paranormal investigators share notes, data, and resources with like-minded peers to obtain proof the supernatural is real. Some do so for the sake of gaining knowledge, while others see a means of acquiring power. These ghost hunters, mediums, and occultists often form organizations that provide the means to achieve lofty goals. These groups, even when they operate in secrecy, are eventually noticed by natives of the supernatural world. Some of these fabricate misinformation and feed it to investigators, throwing them off track. Others send cultists or informants to infiltrate a group and subvert its members to unwittingly do their bidding.

Whatever the reason, however they've formed, ghost-hunting organizations have their place in the World of Darkness – though it may not be precisely the role they desire. Ghost hunting is not only about adventure, the thrill of discovery, or morbid revelations about grisly demises. Some hunters prefer to investigate in more cloistered locales, poring over historical tomes, first-hand accounts, and classified legal investigations of paranormal activities for the sake of acquiring knowledge.

## Knowledge Seekers

Many groups investigating the paranormal are seekers of knowledge who dedicate their lives to unlocking supernatural

mysteries through the lens of faith, the pursuit of science, or a belief in the arcane. Often, these groups profess to research mysteries for the sake of unlocking secrets, while others look for a particular piece of lore to deal with the dead.

## The Arcanum

Founded in 1885 by a former member of the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day, the Arcanum is a highly organized and well-funded collection of investigators who study supernatural beings. While other occultists focus on acquiring useful knowledge and artifacts to hunt creatures, the Arcanum's members are more interested in amassing and controlling information pertaining to the supernatural. Many in the Arcanum focus on the activities of mages and vampires because they see them as agents of great change and destruction. Others, however, focus on sorting fact from fiction concerning ghosts.

Though the Arcanum's knowledge base is extensive, it's not absolute. Arguably, there is more information circulating about ghosts than there is any other type of supernatural being – thanks to modern methods of communication. To keep their facts current, small, focused groups are often encouraged to investigate ghost activity on the material plane and in other realms of reality known as the Penumbra and Near Umbra. These groups view traces of spiritual resonance in the



Penumbra through special instruments and occult ritual practices to assess threats and investigate rumors.

Arcanum ghost hunters mostly spend their time tracking down mysterious occurrences and rumored ghost sightings. While they can interact with the Umbral realms, because they are mortal their actions are severely limited and doing so is dangerous. Obsessed investigators skate dangerously close to being classed as Reality Deviants; their fascination with the sphere of Spirit bears similarities to that of the loremasters of the Hermetics and the shamanic visionaries of the Dream-speakers. Some in the Arcanum are experienced thanatologists, devoting their lives to communication with the dead and understanding the workings of the afterlife.

Unlike other groups, the Arcanum recognizes that necromancy doesn't always neatly intersect with the hunt for ghosts. Members take special care to review incident reports, because they're aware that power is wielded by the supernatural. For example, while members are expressly forbidden to engage vampires, some experts spy on the Giovanni, collecting reams of information on their necromantic activities. Despite explicit orders, certain Arcanum members cannot help but directly investigate such instances, risking their lives (and the Arcanum) for the sake of unlocking the dark secrets of the Clan of Death — for the pursuit of knowledge, of course.

## **Members & Teams**

Members of the Arcanum tend to be more informed and better equipped than other paranormal investigators. This gives them an edge other ghost hunters can only dream of. While their knowledge is impressive, members don't always have the same gritty field experience other groups do. Collating and analyzing data is something at which Arcanum groups excel, and their occult collections are remarkable, but when it comes to their personal safety they often forget the basic arts of self-defense.

Teams are instructed to witness, observe, and record signs of paranormal activity. The Arcanum discourages teams from interfering with the supernatural, but understand some encounters cannot be avoided. Ghost hunting teams are often sent to investigate rumors of sightings and haunts after the police or another organization has already been at the site.

Team members are tight-lipped and guard their secrets well for fear of exposure; they are fully aware their occult libraries and knowledge of the supernatural make them a target. Of all ghost hunters, Arcanum teams tend to be the most secretive and least likely to work openly with non-members. Often, teams will fabricate personas to hire other ghost hunters to do their legwork for them, and pay them in cash to avoid unnecessary questions. Rival ghost hunters who've proven they can hold their own often unwittingly work for the Arcanum, and never realize the danger in which they're putting themselves. Should the Arcanum's "contractors" realize who's pulling their strings, the organization will have more than the supernatural to fear.

## **Notable Arcanists**

Arcanists who study ghosts tend to be more paranoid than other members of the organization, and use a variety of aliases to cover their tracks. Some fear ghosts; most are terrified that other denizens of the supernatural will lure them out into the open, either pretending to be a ghost or by planting a plausible rumor. Specialists range from Arcanist mediums who want to learn more about their own abilities, to students of world myth.

### **AMAYA ITO, PROFESSOR AND ARCHIVIST**

Amaya Ito is an archivist who works in acquisitions for Harvard University. Ito holds a PhD in American, Japanese, and Korean folklore, and travels around the country to acquire rare books and papers for Beinecke Library. The daughter of immigrants who practiced the Shinto religion, Ito grew up believing the supernatural is real. Following the mysterious death of her younger brother, Ito struggled to make sense of his death, and spent years separating fact from myth. Eventually Ito was approached by the Arcanum, who offered her books and resources in exchange for her loyalty. Ito's motivation for staying with the group is to uncover more information about her brother's death. Thus far, they haven't given her any leads, but the professor doesn't feel her time has been wasted. In the absence of answers, Ito has been dedicating hours to research. Her goal is to find and communicate with her brother's ghost in order to take down his killer.

### **JACK DAVIS, TECHNOPHILE**

Jack Davis is a young technologist who is obsessed with traveling to the Underworld and recording his activities in that plane. He believes the best way to serve the Arcanum is to ensure that the organization embraces modern technology. David spends a lot of time creating a digital archive of its rare books; he believes it's only a matter of time before the supernatural finds and destroys the Arcanum's physical resources. To prevent a catastrophe, Davis hopes to create a searchable, digital version of the organization's entire library that can be remotely accessed by its members. His obsession has led him to champion a new library of audio files and video footage of real supernatural encounters. Though some members of the Arcanum think Davis is heading down a path of self-destruction, they are unaware the technophile has secretly been hiring other experts to authenticate and supply him with footage. Davis is unaware his time is running out. Sooner or later, another member of the Arcanum will find out what he's up to — hopefully before they encounter the ghosts that are toying with him.

## **Chamber of Corvi**

The Chamber of Corvi is a mysterious group whose origins and machinations are shrouded in layers of secrets. The organization has increased its interest in the paranormal after one of its members, Christopher Barrow, was named



## For the Player: Faith and the Supernatural

Paranormal investigators and ghost hunters peer into the World of Darkness because they are curious about the supernatural. Some want to know if it exists, while others are convinced it does and want proof. For many mortals, death and dying tap into social mores and religious beliefs that shape their approach to ghost hunting. Convincing someone the supernatural is real is one thing, but offering undeniable proof that ghosts are real can test their faith. When deciding how you want to shape your character's role in the hunt, choose a ghost hunting organization that meshes well with their worldview. Though conflict is an extraordinary narrative tool, you'll want to work with a group aligned with your beliefs.

to a vampire organization's fabled "most wanted" Red List of known, terrifying threats. Barrow, the only mortal on the Red List, not only collects rare texts, but has also discovered the means to kidnap and control the denizens of the supernatural. After being named, the occultist's fabled safehouse — the Raven's Nest — was eventually discovered, along with several handwritten letters, ledgers, and journals describing the Chamber of Corvi, its activities, and a few of its members.

Barrow's notes, which were "leaked" online by an anonymous poster, are a mixture of taxonomy describing different crows like the *corvus nasicus* from Cuba or the *corvus bennetti* from Australia. Conspiracy theorists believe the taxonomy hints at the location of a specific member of the group, and that the Chamber of Corvi is a secret order of enigmatic, if not powerful, wealthy politicians and magnates who are obsessed with gaining knowledge of the supernatural.

Since the exposure of the Chamber of Corvi, other anonymous sources have come forward to post more information, and pressure is growing to find and arrest its members. Like the Arcanum, the Chamber of Corvi are not skeptics: they fully believe the supernatural is real and may be controlling certain high-profile individuals in politics and finance. Despite this fear, each *corvus* appears to be fixated on collecting lore about the supernatural, and has access to resources to purchase rare artifacts. A few members specialize in a "type" of supernatural represented by a Latin name. One transaction described the sale of a "corpus spiritus" or a "spirit body"; another described the purchase of an "cor" or "heart" at auction. Unfortunately, no one's certain what those descriptions refer to, but it's clear someone wants the Chamber's members exposed; several rumors are circulating that the Chamber is a front for stolen art and human trafficking, which is putting pressure on law enforcement to infiltrate and track them down.

The Chamber of Corvi's organizational structure protects the group. Membership is not tied to a particular location and there are no headquarters. If one *corvus* is arrested, they can provide no further information, and can only reveal what their own activities have been — preventing a global takedown.

For more on Christopher Barrow, see **Dread Names**, Red List p. 41.

## Members & Teams

The Chamber of Corvi's members hide their identities behind aliases and codenames to avoid being exposed to more powerful forces. Many Corvi are occult enthusiasts and rare book collectors who simply want to learn more about the supernatural; unlike Christopher Barrow, they typically avoid performing ancient rites and rituals — they prefer to gather knowledge and respect what they don't know rather than contort powers to their own ends. To this end, members compete with each other for knowledge and, in some cases, the possession of a rare artifact — the older the better.

Several members are fixated on ghosts and hauntings, typically for one of two reasons: either they're facing their own mortality, or they're not sure why the existence of ghosts isn't accepted as "truth." Often, a *Corvus* will hire an individual ghost hunter (rather than approach a group) to track down an ancient artifact or investigate a haunted location. The transaction will often be conducted in cash, and the ghost hunter won't realize who they were working for — until a rumor pops up online.

## Notable Corvi

The names of Chamber members are hidden beneath layers of false identities, Latin monikers, and nicknames. Members are fully aware that they're dallying with real, supernatural forces, and hide their true names for a variety of reasons. There are only a handful of Corvi who've been exposed over the years. Most wind up missing shortly after their names are leaked, with few exceptions.

### KENNEDY HUGHES, FINANCIER AND SECRET MEDIUM

Rumor has it Kennedy Hughes joined the Chamber of Corvi simply because it's a wealthy organization. Hughes is a middle-aged banker from Madrid who's smart with finances and knows how to make a deal. Hughes acquires rare texts at auction and via estate sales all over Europe, and is on cordial terms with members like Barrow — but prefers to keep a low profile. Hughes is a medium who has been visited by strange spirits for some time and does not want other members to



know about their gifts. Should other members learn that Hughes is gleaning the organization's darkest secrets from ghosts, the financier will be forced to make a choice between escaping capture or preemptively attacking other members while they still can, with the help of a few ghostly allies.

### **RASHAM AL-SAYED, RARE BOOK COLLECTOR**

Rasham al-Sayed is an independent rare book collector who specializes in the assessment, study, and acquisition of antique books. Unlike his peers, the professor is less interested in catering to the whims of the social elite and is fixated on the cultural preservation of books that predate the 20th century. Though al-Sayed is reluctant to admit it, the books he targets for acquisition are shrouded by rumors and strange, supernatural occurrences. Each tome he purchases is either rumored to be haunted or the former property of a medium, occultist, or spiritualist. Thanks to a "private" grant funded by the Chamber of Corvi, al-Sayed is always traveling and is rarely at home. Should his peers start asking questions, they may unwittingly find al-Sayed is uncomfortable in his own library, but cannot explain why.

## **Power Seekers**

Paranormal investigators who hunt the supernatural don't always do so for the sake of acquiring knowledge. Some want to wield what they learn as an unparalleled weapon to fight back the darkness, while others glean power for their own ends.

### **FBI Special Affairs Department**

While most law enforcement agencies stay firmly rooted in the comfortable notion that reality is consistent and mundane, certain secret factions know differently. A small branch of the FBI known as the Special Affairs Department (SAD) works to investigate supernatural sightings and other paranormal occurrences. This group takes seriously the notion that vampires, werewolves, and other monsters may exist, although they maintain a strong degree of skepticism and scientific rationale in their efforts. Of primary importance to SAD is the notion that these supernatural beings may hold undue influence in the realms of politics, crime, and even the fabric of reality itself. Thus, SAD considers the investigation of the paranormal a grave matter of national security.

While perhaps less dire than these investigations of preternatural groups, several employees of SAD are tasked with showing up to the scenes of ghost visitations and other supposedly "spiritual" occurrences. The number of agents assigned to investigate ghosts and hauntings is so significant, a new task force called the Post Life Entity Crew (or PLEC) has recently been formed to deal with an uptick in reported cases. Of primary concern are instances when ghosts are reportedly violent toward U.S. citizens or when panic ensues in local communi-

ties as a result of sightings. Indeed, while PLEC units may quietly gather information at such sites, their outward goals are to disperse any gathered crowds and to reassure the populace that such paranormal experiences are mere hoaxes. Some of the more scientifically-minded team members still find it difficult to accept non-rational explanations for ghosts and other supernatural phenomena; others have become true believers in the notion of the "other side" or some form of afterlife. Thus, in addition to the rigorous examination of accumulated evidence, much of PLEC's activity behind the scenes involves debates on the nature of reality itself.

### **Members & Teams**

PLEC teams often show up to locations of sightings and other ghostly activities dressed in all-black suits and sunglasses. Their demeanor is stoic and they remain reticent when onlookers probe them with questions. Their goals are to clear civilians from the scene and to dispute any claims that the supernatural exists...at least in public relations. Privately, they scour these locations, collecting as much evidence as possible for their classified files. Because funding is always a problem for PLEC, they often operate with a skeleton crew. In periods of heightened supernatural activity, they may hire freelance private investigators for information gathering, usually small local groups without organizational support. These amateur investigators, however, are never allowed into the SAD headquarters and risk imprisonment or worse if they happen to peek into a classified file.

While their methods are similar, PLEC agents are most suspicious of hunters from the Centre, which is funded through more local – and often superstitious – government and private sources. Of course, most SAD agents are skeptical of any ghost hunter who can't follow orders and buys into pseudoscience. Despite their orders, agents are the least likely to believe in ghosts, and will assume a criminal is behind an attack before ascribing violence to the supernatural. Other groups know this and steer clear – lest an agent mistake a paranormal investigator for a potential thief or worse.

### **Notable Agents**

Most SAD agents are the rank and file suit-wearing government employees other groups expect them to be. On occasion, a believer does manage to infiltrate their ranks – but often finds their investigations are hampered by miles of red tape, ineptitude, and cover-ups when the supernatural is encountered. For this reason, some PLEC agents moonlight as paranormal investigators, hoping to uncover the truth without fear of oversight.

### **PHIL BROWN, FBI SECRETARY**

Phil Brown is a secretary who works in the Chicago branch studying the strange and the paranormal. In the interest of "public safety," Brown fields an anonymous hotline and reroutes calls to different agents, supervisors, and departments. Most of the time the calls point to a mixture of thieves,



drug deals gone wrong, and nosy trespassers — but not always. Every once in a while, the calls churn up a lead: a victim who feels weak after being attacked by “something cold and clammy,” a witness who watched pictures and paintings fly around their living room, a dying patient whose last words were a warning not to stare at the black dog’s eyes. Of course, Brown can’t possibly know which calls are hoaxes, crimes, or the real deal. Still, the secretary has an uncanny ability to route a call to the right agent at the perfect time. If investigators can buddy up with Brown after hours, he’ll tell stories of the “ones that can’t be solved” and will help point them toward cold cases the FBI would love to forget.

### **JANET FISCHER, VETERAN FBI AGENT**

Some agents are the hard-nosed investigators that rookies are warned about on their first day. Fischer is a career agent who knows more than she lets on. She always knows where to look for evidence, where to find the body, and when to back off from an investigation. Fischer is one of the oldest agents on staff who’s survived several partners and supervisors. The agency chalks her abilities up to her eidetic memory and Sherlock-level investigative skills, but Fischer knows she has a gift, the kind she wishes she didn’t. Fischer is an untrained medium who relies on her abilities when the situation is dire and her powers of observation aren’t enough to suss out the truth. She’s survived thus far through a combination of FBI training, sheer willpower, and a pinch of luck. Unfortunately, Fischer has many enemies in the bureau and among the supernatural. Now, someone is putting the word out for investigators to unravel what Fischer’s deal is, and why so many tragic accidents follow in her wake.

## **Piercers of the Veil**

The Piercers of the Veil originated in the twelfth century in Bingen am Rhein in Germany, when a small contingent of monks began to investigate the strange visions received by Hildegard, a nun who believed that God spoke to her directly through mystical visions. Disbelieving that God would choose to speak through a mere woman, however sanctified, these monastics developed alternative explanations for these supernatural visitations, insisting that the Benedictine monastery where she resided must be haunted. This line of questioning led to the uncovering of several key scrolls and tomes from centuries past that catalogued otherworldly phenomena, particularly experiences with spirits and the afterlife.

These early monks interpreted such instances as souls stuck in Purgatory before their final transition to Heaven. However, throughout the centuries, the Piercers of the Veil have developed a wide variety of theoretical models for understanding the afterlife and the transition of souls from the body to other planes of existence. Indeed, while such scholarly investigations were kept secret as gnostic mysteries

in the early days, curious nobility in the Renaissance eventually joined the sect.

By the late Victorian era, the religious roots of the Piercers became akin to a historical footnote, as would-be spiritualists and occultists attempted to join the secret society. However, entrance into the Piercers is tightly controlled by the scholars of the local chapters, which are seeded throughout Northern Europe and certain core cities in the United States, including Salem, Tampa Bay, and New Orleans. The Piercers are fiercely protective of the supernatural knowledge they’ve acquired, and train members in techniques to help maintain its historic libraries.

Unlike other organizations who specialize in occult tomes, the Piercers possess the largest collection of journals and first-person accounts of ghosts who’ve returned from the dead. To gain access to the organization’s libraries, supplicants must pass several intensive membership rituals, including academic exams and even physical ordeals to ensure they can be trusted. Members are all expected to study the journals in some fashion, and rumors are swirling that their studies are being digitized to map times and locations where the Shroud is weak. To prepare its members, senior Piercers remind recruits that in order to understand the afterlife, a supplicant must push the limits of their own body and mind, experiences which, when undergone, allow members to pierce the veil to the other side. While their libraries are forbidden to the uninitiated, ghost hunters often consult the Piercers of the Veil when deeper occult knowledge is needed to unravel a mystery...for a price.

## **Members & Teams**

In modern times, the emphasis of the Piercers remains intensive historical study, archiving, and collecting accounts of ghosts, as well as other supernatural phenomena. Piercer investigators are often tasked with arriving on the sites of “confirmed” haunted locations to take interviews or collect other information. Some are assigned to rival groups as infiltrators in order to steal information for the archives. Other Piercers seek out funding for their research projects from benevolent — or morbid — patrons. While they perceive themselves as the elite class of paranormal investigators, acolytes do attempt to ally with other groups in order to acquire more accounts of the afterlife.

Of all the groups, Piercers are some of the most adept at living a double life. They won’t share what tradition they practice or what their beliefs are to just anyone. In fact, they prefer not to, which leads many investigators to become curious about what the group is hiding. Outsiders often call the Piercers “creepy” for a reason: they are curious and never stop asking questions, especially when they hear the word “Shadowlands.”



## Notable Piercers

Piercers are a mixture of scholars, investigators, and self-proclaimed sages who study the information gathered for them. They are the least likely group to crack a joke, and take their work very seriously. The Piercers are not gathering data for its own sake; they are fixated on finding out how ghosts are created. To what end, even the Piercers don't know.

### JOAN VON STRAUSS, AMATEUR INVESTIGATOR

Joan von Strauss is a Piercer like her mother, grandfather, and great-aunt before her. Like her living relatives, Joan is curious about the supernatural because of her family's connection to the original founders. Joan has heard all the stories about how her ancestor was recruited to join the Piercers not for his piety or his keen intellect, but for his political influence amongst Germany's wealthy and elite. Recently, Joan has discovered her family is not the kind-hearted religious clan she's been told about. Now, she's beginning to realize that the von Strauss legacy is tainted with dark, murderous secrets. For Joan, this revelation makes sense, for while her family may profess to be scholars, she's walked in on rituals and seances that most academics wouldn't dare to try. Joan is curious what her relatives are up to, and will secretly pay investigators to spy on them. Of course, she can't guarantee their safety. That would be asking too much.

### FATHER BRUNO, EXPERT HUNTER

Father Bruno is one of the few remaining clergy members who follows the traditions and lifestyle of the original Piercers. The monk lives in a secluded German monastery tucked away in the Black Forest near a supernatural hotspot, where he spends most of his time reading and meditating. At night, Father Bruno leaves the monastery to test his many theories that the uninhabited area is a crossroads for the dead. Sometimes, the monk will encounter cultists and other paranormal investigators who've heard of the forest's haunted reputation. When he can, he'll offer assistance, provided the intruders leave and don't return. The monk has a gruff demeanor, an uncanny knack for finding wayward ghosts, and is reluctant to share his knowledge and theories. Some ghost hunters think Father Bruno is hiding something (or someone) back at the monastery. Others, think it's weird the monk is the only other person investigators encounter. Should a ghost hunter get lost in the woods they may unlock more than one mystery.

## Thrill Seekers

People who investigate the paranormal don't always have a good reason. Thrill seekers are attracted to the supernatural just for the rush. Subconsciously, these investigators know the supernatural is dangerous and shouldn't be toyed with...but they don't care. As long as they feel a tingle crawling up and

down their spine, and the overwhelming sense of relief when they're safe, they don't care what danger they put themselves in.

## Paranormal Investigation Collective

While most ghost hunters work quietly in the shadows, some seek the bright, if temporary, lights of fame. The Paranormal Investigation Collective (PIC) is a group of hunters in various cities in the United States who collect information from the public about supposed hauntings. A PIC team is sent to the location to investigate, along with a reality TV crew to record their findings...and their interpersonal drama. The results of these hunts are edited together into episodes and shown on cable TV with the tagline: "PIC or it didn't happen." As many of these reports end up being cold leads, the PIC teams keep viewers hooked with various forms of on-screen antics, from showing off cool new gear to spicy romances to explosive arguments between cast members. Paradoxically, cold leads also reassure captive audiences that the world is, indeed, a safe place free of spooky supernatural activity.

The PIC teams are also known for their sense of style. As television personalities, they tend to dress in the latest fashions with their hair professionally coifed. PIC teams often carry extensive gear that has been augmented by propmakers to look futuristic, including EMF meters, geiger counters, and night vision video cameras. PIC teams are usually quite diverse in order to appeal to a wide variety of audiences, regularly featuring hosts that are female, queer, and people of color. Regardless of the success rate of their ghost hunting, the PIC teams try to push the envelope each season with more extreme, thrill-seeking stunts...and the ratings reflect well on their efforts, at least as far as cable TV is concerned. All Paranormal Investigation Collective shows are first broadcast on the wildly popular syndicated network station Omni TV.

## Members & Teams

PIC teams will hunt for ghosts anywhere as long as they think it will make good TV. Local PIC groups are assigned to specific cities for spinoff shows, such as *The Paranormal Investigation Collective: Seattle Edition*. Other ghost hunters tend to view PIC teams with apprehension, especially the Pax Aeternalis Alliance, who view their own work as a sacred duty, not a fad to be exploited for publicity. The Centre sometimes sends scientists to try out for the show, though they only make the cut if they are photogenic or charismatic enough. The Piercers of the Veil regularly purchase the rights to the outtake footage from the show, often finding authentic evidence of ghosts on clips carelessly tossed on the cutting room floor.

While many ghost hunters snub the PIC, a few investigators think they can be used to get more serious teams into high profile places.





## Notable PICs

Members in the Paranormal Investigation Collective are loosely connected to one another; many individual ghost hunters have formed a unique (if not flamboyant) persona. Though they each have their personality quirks, the PICs train as a team so each member knows what their role is and what looks good on camera. When they're not captured on video, PICs investigate what other ghost hunters are up to — mainly to find a new angle they can use in their shows. Many investigators steer clear of PICs if they can; they often regard them as annoying rivals or unqualified “pedestrians” who are giving real ghost hunters a bad name.

### SANDY “SPOOKS” MUELLER, ACTRESS

Sandy Mueller always wanted to be a “scream queen” ever since she was a little girl. Of course, Mueller couldn't tell you *why* she loves spooky movies, just that she'd like to star in one some day. After striking out in Hollywood, Mueller found the next best thing: reality TV. She'll tell everyone she's super serious about ghosts and being a paranormal investigator when she's smiling for the camera. When she's not being filmed, Mueller manages a B-movie fan club where she hob-nobs with character actors from the silver screen. Most PICs put up with Mueller because she's got great timing and is a natural entertainer. A few, however, think she takes her performance a bit too far; they've caught her talking to empty corners when the camera wasn't filming and even spotted her practicing the occasional scream. Should her fellow teammates take her strange behavior seriously, they'll learn that Mueller has a secret — the kind she can't just run away from.

### ARLEN SINCLAIR, FILMMAKER

Sinclair is a veteran filmmaker and producer who's dumped a lot of money into reality TV shows and on-demand videos distributed via multiple channels. While most PICs haven't met Sinclair, they have heard several rumors about their mysterious benefactor and where his money *really* comes from. Some think Arlen Sinclair is a fake moniker to hide his true identity and ties to the mob. Isn't that what the Rosellini and Giovanni are connected to? Others think Sinclair is being unfairly targeted for the way his shows are disrupting Hollywood studios, and take pride in “fighting back” against those greedy producers. Most PICs don't ask questions, though, because the checks keep coming and the shows are always funded. Right now, PIC-run shows are watched, downloaded, and talked about more than those “other” hacks, and that's pretty much all anyone else cares about.

## The Wisteria Prophets

The Wisteria Prophets, despite their claims to “ancient traditions,” are a Western occult society that dates back to the Victorian era. Unlike other groups who hunt the supernatural to help put spirits to rest, the Prophets train to become conduits for ghosts and live for the thrill of entertaining the paranormal in their physical bodies. While the Prophets might claim they're doing important work, most channelers are middle-aged bourgeois who toy with the paranormal simply because they can.

The Prophets were reputedly founded by Lord Alfred Whitingshire in Littlemore, England. Letters found stashed in the Museum of Victoriana, however, refer to several mem-



bers known only by their first initials. For many years, the group would meet in the museum's wisteria gardens on Sunday evenings to discuss matters pertaining to ghosts, but did not hold their first séance at the stroke of midnight until after several members received notice their loved ones had died in the Great War.

Little is known about what happened during the séance; several relatives have spun tales of ghosts who lifted tables, threw pictures, and dropped the temperature of the room. Whether a spirit took advantage of the members' grief or not, the Prophets continued to meet after that first séance, desperate to communicate with family members who had passed on. Following World War II, the Prophets expanded their society to include select donors and clients interested in witnessing their spiritualist rituals and the ghosts, or Spectres, they claim to control.

## Members & Teams

Now, the Prophets are tight-lipped about their supernatural activities; most members are encouraged to live on Whittingshire's sprawling estate where they're free to conduct séances behind closed doors in safe rooms designed for "responsible" channelers. Some do participate in the occasional ghost hunt, and will work with other paranormal investigators should a situation require a skilled channeler — for the right fee, of course. While the Prophets attempt to maintain a pure and anti-capitalist view of ghost hunting, the reality is that most channelers are addicted to their paranormal experiences and lose track of fiscal responsibility. Most would rather charge, borrow, or even steal the funding needed for their expeditions instead of earning it themselves, which puts them at odds with other investigators who are seeking peers who prefer modern methods.

## Notable Prophets

Prophets tend to be cliquish and don't put their activities online for other paranormal investigators to see. They're very interested in making sure they can keep channeling without fear of being judged or punished for their brand of thrill-seeking, however, and will follow other ghost hunters in the hopes they'll have an opportunity to use their talents. Some Prophets, however, are new to the organization and may be an outsider's "way in" to participate in a séance or visit the museum.

### SCOT ABRAMS, HISTORY STUDENT

Scot Abrams is a British history student who's currently taking a semester off from college to pin down which area he wants to specialize in. He's a new addition to the Prophets who hasn't been to a séance yet, but he knows someone who has. Abrams has been telling the other members how he's fascinated by the rise of Theosophy and how fast the movement spread; he's uniquely curious about how and why Victorian culture responded so well to its precepts and belief in ghosts —

especially since Theosophists claimed they weren't technically a religion or a science. Secretly, Abrams has heard rumors that there are a lot of moral and ethical issues related to what the Prophets are doing, but he needs more evidence before he can expose the group's darker side.

### ROSA MEDINA, ASPIRING AUTHOR

Rosa Medina is a Spanish author who dreams of hitting the bestseller lists. Medina recently signed up for a tour of the museum and befriended a nice lady named Victoria; ever since her visit, she's been hoping to book a stay at the Whittingshire Estate, and is eager to put together a writer's retreat. Medina loves to spread the rumor that her story, which is set during the Victorian era, just "popped" from her imagination. Medina's tale isn't exactly true, for she remembers the stories her mother used to tell her; her mother used to be a Prophet, but is one of the few members who left the group before getting hurt. Now, Medina wants to find out why her mother changed her name, why she's so tight-lipped, and why she never wanted Rosa to follow in her footsteps.

## Shadow Groups

Unlike other paranormal investigators, shadow groups are directly connected to the supernatural, whether their members are aware someone else is pulling their strings or not. The only thing shadow groups have in common with each other is that *some* supernatural being or creature is operating behind the scenes, and is either manipulating or using members for their own, shadowy purposes.

## Ashukhi Corporation

This independent company focuses on funding archaeological digs in Africa and the Middle East. The Ashukhi Corporation's mission statement is to accumulate and preserve scrolls, jewels, tools, and other artifacts that would otherwise remain lost to the sands of time. While some of these objects draw excellent prices in museum curation and private collection markets, Ashukhi retain some of their more inscrutable findings, keeping a secret archive at their headquarters in Alexandria. They also tend to offer special donations to certain key associates...namely, newly-dead mummies.

Indeed, despite all of their philanthropic and scholarly work, Ashukhi's true purpose remains clouded in mystery to most people. Drawing strength from their symbol, the Egyptian ram's head, its members seek to discover the hidden lore of the ancient mummies, a task they undertake with the utmost reverence. The majority of Ashukhi employees firmly believe that their work helps to fight the evils of Apophis, and that they are doing their part to combat his stranglehold on human society. In order to best conduct these efforts, Ashukhi members must become skilled at many methods of interacting with ghosts, as their target locations are often



tombs or other haunted places.

The Ashukhi Corporation's members are often thwarted by angry spirits who guard ancient tombs, historic mansions, and heritage sites from the living. As part of their corporate training, employees are taught how to differentiate between types of ghosts and recognize when an object is haunted or mystically bound to a spirit. Employees don't always take their training to heart, and pass off the corporation's earnest lessons as a PR stunt. After all, a haunted amulet can fetch a higher price at auction than one without a legend attached. Still, there are quite a few employees who take their training seriously; no one who works for Ashukhi Corporation can afford not to, for those who stick around long enough will encounter a ghost sooner or later.

## Members & Teams

Employees of the Ashukhi Corporation are often more reverent toward spirits than your average ghost hunters. Given their deep connection to the process of death and rebirth, they approach ghosts with sympathy and kindness, unless such entities manifest malignant behavior.

While Ashukhi employees may join a hunting party for a time under the guise of a typical tomb raider, their metaphysical beliefs remain closely guarded secrets. Should such secrets become unearthed, these individuals are more likely to disappear in the night than to enact violence...unless trapped. As long as other hunters ask few questions and allow the Ashukhi Corporation to keep their coveted lore when they discover new scrolls, these archaeologists make excellent additions to hunting parties due to their academic and super-

natural expertise.

For these reasons, adding an Ashukhi employee to the group is an attractive alternative to the more condescending scholars of the Arcanum or the Piercers of the Veil.

## Notable Employees

Employees who work for the Ashukhi Corporation spend most of their time in the field. They very rarely get called in to speak with management, and almost always check in virtually. Archaeologists and their teams don't always agree on what site needs to be thoroughly investigated and which area should be ignored or abandoned, but employees have learned not to question the higher-ups. Often, employees work with other ghost hunters or paranormal investigators because they were told to, which creates tension should a site yield poor or even faked results.

### SAMY JAL, TEAM LEAD

Samy Jal is an up-and-coming archaeologist who is trying to decolonize Egyptian lore and negotiate the return of artifacts. Jal believes that the Western world's fascination with Egypt has angered the gods which, in turn, has made them rise up and murder Anubis. With the god of the underworld missing, the spirits are restless and need help. Jal is fully aware his beliefs are esoteric and can't be proven, but he has a feeling he can't shake. Unlike some of his peers, Jal is anxious to work with Westerners and loves so-called ghost hunters. Often, Jal knows far more than they do, and he enjoys correcting their misguided notions. Unfortunately, Jal has met a few disrespectful amateurs that wound up being cursed after following his careful instructions, but so far no one has blamed





him for their ills.

### **DALIA DENG, CATALOGUER**

Dalia Deng is in charge of receiving, authenticating, and shipping artifacts back to the home office. Recently, she's moved from Khartoum to Amsterdam at the behest of her employer. Deng is opening a warehouse to examine a treasure trove of artifacts, and is hiring contract employees to help her sort through the thousands of items recovered from museums, donated from estate sales, and purchased at auction. Deng doesn't know why she was relocated to Amsterdam; she's not willing to ask too many questions, however, because she knows what happens to employees who do. Deng is smart enough to know she's being watched, but isn't sure "who" is keeping tabs on her. Though she's confident on the job, Deng takes extra precautions when she's not working, and will hire other investigators to help keep her and her artifacts safe.

## **Calypso Network**

Not everyone is gifted with the Sight of the Unseen. So difficult to come by are the inborn talents of psychic abilities, mediumship, and visions of apparitions that individuals with such skills are seldom believed and often reviled by those without the Sight. Indeed, such people often end up in insane asylums or spend their lives in doubt or denial. Fortunately, the Calypso Network is there to comfort these tortured seers and gather them into a collective of open-minded seekers of the mysteries. Calypso is made up of several branches, from internet advice forums to spiritualist bloggers to a chain of New Age bookstores, many of which offer tarot readings and medium services. For many poor souls benighted by visions from the Other Realms, the Calypso Network is a port in the storm, composed of sympathetic and knowledgeable former hippies and would-be mystics.

Unfortunately, while maintaining the outward appearance of credibility in metaphysical circles, the Calypso Network is nothing but a front company for Project Odyssey, a subsidiary of the multinational conglomerate Pentex. Project Odyssey, headed by the unscrupulous opportunist Kiro Yamazuki, aims to lure unsuspecting psychics and mediums into the fold by promising an environment free of judgment and scientific rationalizations. Calypso agents come in many guises — from old wise men reeking of white sage to benevolent priestesses offering to read the fortunes of unsuspecting Seers. Once in a state of relaxation in a calm and private location, these agents bind corrupted spirits to the brains of the unsuspecting mediums, which cause wildly unpredictable emotional responses in their new hosts. Then, Project Odyssey agents ply these unfortunates with Magadon's psychotropic drugs to calm the cacophony of psychic noise and onslaught of ghosts, who are drawn to the now Wyrminfested Seers. Through this cycle of false comfort, calamity, and pacification

through drugs, the Calypso Network keeps the hosts in a state of perpetual dependency...until they need to deploy the seers for some other purpose.

## **Members & Teams**

The Calypso Network harvests many a future host from among individuals loosely connected to ghost hunting. Typical targets include guides for ghost tours in popular haunted locales, such as plantation houses or graveyards in Southern US cities. Mediums and other sensitive Seers are often employed by ghost hunting parties of many factions, only to eventually become corrupted by Calypso. Indeed, mortals tortured by the Sight can rarely find honest work or a sympathetic ear...that is, of course, until they meet the Network. Other hunting groups tend to rely on the considerable talents of these individuals, but few try to understand the gravity of this gift and the curse that Seers endure. Any medium hired by a hunting party is likely to be susceptible to the lure of Calypso...if not tainted beyond recognition by the Wyrminfested already. Often, doses of certain potent drugs produced by Magadon are all that a spirit-corrupted host requests as payment for working a hunt. Then again, for less sympathetic hunters, allowing a host to go off their meds incites some surprising results, as ghosts tend to swarm these individuals and feed off their essence with insatiable vigor. After all, those freaks are not really people anymore anyway...are they?

## **Notable Employees**

The Calypso Network's employees are a mix of contractors and salaried professionals who specialize in a wide range of fields. Ghost hunters tend to be scattered throughout the organization, and often work part-time for many months, if not years, before they're brought into the fold. Employees who freelance or work from home have a favorable view of their employer, and aren't necessarily aware of the Calypso Network's seedier side. Most teams report to a staff supervisor or leader who is, however, which keeps things "simple" should an expendable employee step out of line.

### **CHEN BAO YUN, SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERT**

Chen Bao Yun is a consultant working for the Calypso Network to help manage their online reputation. Yun puts together social media content strategies to help paranormal investigators sharpen their image and ensure they're taken seriously. An expert in damage control, Yun has seen her fair share of disasters caused by everything from simple spelling errors to viral videos filmed by a client's rival. Yun is currently working on a package to help new freelancers get out in the field and assess self-identified mystics and mediums. Though she isn't sure she believes that mediums are real, Yun does believe that ghosts may exist, and is happy to help the Calypso Network uncover the truth. The expert is convinced that the Network is doing the right thing, and will defend their actions, even if they seem a little...off.



## BRUCE HANSSEN, CORPORATE PHARMACIST

Bruce Hanssen logged twenty-two years with Magadon as a pharmacist before he started asking questions. After one bad review and a crappy raise, Hanssen decided to take a closer look at his role in the company and how his designer drugs were being used. Hanssen always suspected that the psychotropic cocktail of mind-altering substances he mixed up in the lab would produce a litany of undesirable side effects, but he enjoyed the perks of his job a little too well. Now, Hanssen has started to dig into Magadon's activities and is hoping to track down patients who've been prescribed his drugs. He's not sure what he'll find, but with a little luck — and some help from outsiders — he'll get enough intel that he can sell or leak to the press.

## Centre of Unusual Occurrences

The Centre of Unusual Occurrences originated in Vienna, Austria in 1910, and was inspired by a dissertation published by Carl Jung. Though the rest of the medical community is loathe to admit it, the Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst attempted to study occult phenomena through the lens of medical science. In addition to his studies of the mind, Jung was a self-proclaimed alchemist and mystic whose work on the collective unconscious draws from occult symbolism; most doctors and scientists ignore Jung's extracurricular hobbies and shun any talk of the paranormal.

Called the Centre for short, the institution conducts extensive research into so-called paranormal phenomena with the express purpose of debunking supernatural theories and espousing alternative scientific explanations. For several years, following World War I, the Centre brought peace of mind to an anxious public convinced their dead loved ones were haunting cemeteries and blood-stained battlefields.

Despite the Centre's early successes, Jung's idea of the collective unconscious — a web of interconnected symbols linking all mortals through their dreams — rapidly became a source of derision. Some felt the Centre's investigators were too quick to discount hauntings as "tricks of the mind," and were less interested in ghosts than they were in helping victims. Other members of the ghost-hunting community sided with the Centre; they understood that pursuing scientific explanations of the paranormal for their own sake was too risky. Another faction worried that Jung's image would be tarnished once other scientists realized the images he analyzed were being compared to the work of Basil Valentine and Elphias Levi.

Over time, the Centre's membership waxed and waned until only the most dedicated therapists remained. Any experience of the otherworldly — including visitations from ghosts or other purported preternatural entities — was explainable as hallucinations or shifting weather patterns. As the years

passed, the Centre's reputation for helping people who professed to have strange encounters with the supernatural grew. Patients who spent time in the facility were "cured" of their delusions and were able to return to their former lives — to grateful families who could afford the Centre's exorbitant fees in exchange for expert treatment and utter secrecy.

Now, the Centre operates several small facilities at locations worldwide, including Mumbai, Kyoto, Lagos, and Miami. Despite its high prices, the Centre is operating at a loss, and its doors remain open largely thanks to private grants and donations from special interest groups. Outside funding is shifting the Centre's focus, and each facility separates patients according to their specific "delusion." The Department of Common Fears, for example, treats patients who claim to have encountered a ghost — an all-too frequent claim; treatment includes cognitive therapy and group sessions to ease the patient's fears.

## Members & Teams

While the Centre's therapists often present themselves as kind, caring, scientifically-minded doctors who possess rational explanations for all unexplained phenomena, most paranormal investigators regard them with suspicion. Rumors abound of hunters who've gone missing after seeking help from the Centre, and those who have returned after a prolonged visit do so with changed personalities and missing memories.

Researchers from the Department of Observable Delusions often attempt to infiltrate ghost hunting parties and lie about their identities. Groups of Centre-based "reintegration specialists" often take control of haunting investigations and refuse access to those who don't possess the right clearance or credentials. Fed up with their closed-minded attitude, other groups are attempting to sneak into the Centre to find out what's really going on. Should they glean the Centre's secrets, however, they may not like what they find.

## Notable Therapists

The Centre presents itself as a serious organization that has the means to stop any delusion. As such, they regularly publish peer-reviewed articles on these disturbances, providing measurements that posit scientific explanations for all supposed paranormal activity. Some of these papers remain theoretical in nature, however, as the Centre has yet to develop the required tools to demonstrate the thermodynamic nature of such "apparitions." What's more, anyone who gets too close to certain patient rooms is quickly escorted out, leaving some people to believe the Centre is hiding something — or someone. Most paranormal investigators can't walk in through the front doors, but they can connect with therapists should they use scientific and medical terminology to describe the phenomena they're studying.



## **GRETA HERMAN, STAFF PSYCHOLOGIST**

Greta Herman is a recent hire whose career has been based on Jungian psychology. Herman believes that the collective unconscious exists as an alternate plane of reality that can be visited during meditation. Some of the other staff members view Herman's methods as unorthodox; the therapist claims she's astrally projected to visit her grandfather in the realm of the dead, a place she believes is part of the collective unconscious. Most of Herman's work helps patients realize that their experiences feel real because, in an alternate realm, their brushes with the supernatural *are* real — just not in the way they suspect. Of course, should anyone manage to convince Herman the Shadowlands aren't part of a shared visualization, the psychologist will be forced to examine her own experiences with ghosts and the mysterious supervisors she only talks to at night.

## **JACQUES CAZIER, SECURITY GUARD**

Jacques Cazier is a security guard assigned to the graveyard shift. Though he's not a supervisor, he has a set of skeleton keys that can open any door — except for the locked doors found in the southeast wing — should trouble warrant his entry. Cazier took the job because he'd heard many stories referring to missing patients and ghost sightings by former staff members. Cazier sees himself as something of a hero; if he can verify the Centre isn't doing the "good work" they claim they are, he can expose them as frauds. Despite his simplistic goals, Cazier has yet to find enough like-minded allies in the Centre to help him suss out what's really going on.

## **Sympathizer Spin Agents**

Despite the inherent curiosity of the mortal mind and the thousands of years of collective knowledge accumulated on ghosts by these rival factions, the most informed and dangerous group associated with hunting is the New World Order itself. This central policing body of Technocratic mages attempts to control reality by manipulating the flow of information and even tampering with the minds of humans when necessary. When dealing with matters of ghosts and other spiritual phenomena, the New World Order embeds spin agents in various branches of the social infrastructure who reframe supernatural claims as hoaxes and reinforce the primacy of science. These agents, known as Sympathizers, are planted in the media, academia, and even governmental organizations such as the Special Affairs Department. Indeed, some of the most ardent skeptics in SAD are actually Sympathizer Spin Agents tasked with dissuading mortals from perceiving spiritual emanations from the Umbra.

Masters of thought manipulation, the Sympathizer Spin Agents are the ultimate gaslighters. They employ many tactics to make people question their belief in the supernatural. An academic in natural sciences may spend an entire semester

teaching classes and publishing papers debunking so-called spiritual phenomena. Mainstream news channels may feature exposés questioning the sanity of individuals who see ghosts, offering alternative scientific explanations for sightings. In extreme cases, Spin Agents may need to alter the memories of those touched by the supernatural. Indeed, Sympathizers have infiltrated the deepest ranks of the Centre and are responsible for many of the reeducation efforts therein. While the Technocracy favors scientific explanations for all observable phenomena, Spin Agents may also stoop to working within established religious groups to validate more traditional understandings of the afterlife, condemning the notion that a ghost might linger before entering Heaven or Hell.

## **Members & Teams**

Spin Agents are located in most of the major ghost hunting branches, working behind the scenes to unravel these institutions from the inside when possible. While they tend to operate subtly — including positing alternative suggestions to ghostly phenomena or questioning the sanity of the individuals delivering reports — sometimes they must employ more extreme tactics to remove unwanted information from consensual reality.

Spin Agents view discordant thoughts as cancers that must be removed for the health of the overall organism that is knowable reality. With innocuous smiles, insidious suggestions, deliberate misdirections, reputation dismantling, and quiet impositions of mind control, the Spin Agents reassure the world that ghosts are just figments of their colorful imaginations.

## **Notable Spinners**

Spinners are notorious amongst paranormal investigators and it's not hard to find a group of ghost hunters who won't accuse a rival of being one. Spinners often spy on a target for weeks, if not months, before approaching them. Most operate straight out of an abuser's playbook and isolate the victim when they can, cutting them off from their friends and family. While its tactics are messy, some spinners even find themselves recommending select patients to the Centre for the oddest reasons — though most agents have no idea who's lurking in the background.

## **MAUDE REYNOLDS, PROTECTOR OF OCCULT SECRETS**

Maude Reynolds doesn't give a crap about the people she's trying to "help;" she cares about keeping the occluded hidden. In her mind, it's better that way. Nobody needs to know the supernatural is real, and she'd rather break a mind than expose the truth. Still, Reynolds can't help but feel sorry for a lot of ghost hunters — especially the skeptics. If they're going to put all that effort into investigating the paranormal, the least they could do is believe. Occasionally, Reynolds will



## For the Storyteller: Necromancy and Ghost Hunting

The term necromancy conjures different meanings for mortals depending upon what they know and believe. Some may think it's an evil ability that raises the soulless dead, while others might be convinced controlling a corpse is akin to mastering a type of puppetry. When Necromancy (p. 107) is used, however, both mortals and other members of the supernatural community are bound to notice. Despite what a player character thinks, many ungifted mortals will treat necromancy as a subversion of the natural world, and may react with fear. Some may even go so far as to mistakenly assume the necromancer is supernatural himself. Use the specifics of the scene as a guide to illustrate how the display of necromancy affects the living and the supernatural to effectively narrate its effects on surrounding characters.

orchestrate a supernatural event to terrorize a victim and force them to quit hunting ghosts. She knows she's not supposed to, but there are too many skeptics, fakes, opportunists, and naïve ghost hunters who need to abandon their investigations and go home.

### ROBERT SMITH, INTERNET JUNKIE

Robert Smith thinks there's a big difference between "us" and "them." He considers all other ghost hunters — even those scientists at the Centre — to be kids playing with fire. While he'll happily let the more annoying (and determined) investigators get burned, Smith knows that's not what's best for the Technocracy. Most days, he'll go online and use one of several handles to track down a ghost hunt, find out where those damn reality TV shows are filming, or locate a group in the area. Smith has a knack for finding inexperienced groups and enjoys sharing that information with other spinners when he can; sometimes, though, he likes to approach them and take matters into his own hands — just because he's bored.

## Other Organizations

Investigating the supernatural entices the insatiably curious and the power-hungry, despite its taboos. Many mortals don't recognize the supernatural as a real threat, and when they do they're often forced to choose between facing the terrible darkness or slowly letting it swallow them whole. All ghost hunting organizations have varying degrees of visibility. Some operate openly while others prefer to investigate using more subtle methods. Most ghost hunters are wary of groups that don't share information freely, but understand some paranormal investigators have a right to be scared.

### Hounds of Death

The Hounds of Death are paranormal investigators who regard ghosts as a minor inconvenience; they focus their efforts on incidents involving necromancy. Unlike other groups, the Hounds of Death are fully aware that while ghosts

and the undead are both real, most sightings are fake or intentionally fabricated to obscure the truth. The Hounds not only sniff out actual incidents, but are also interested in tracking down necromancers to glean their secrets and funnel these back to their investors.

Funded by the revenants known as the Kairouan Brotherhood, the Hounds of Death are an enigmatic group. Members who've proven themselves are invited to a ceremony where they receive a ritual tattoo of Anubis surrounded by mystical glyphs. The Hounds aren't fully aware who their founders are (or why they're so interested in necromancy), but they have started to build case files on known necromancers — among the living and the undead. As part of their agreement, the Hounds copy their data and share it with the Brotherhood. What their investors don't know, is that the Hounds also hire other investigators to do their grunt work for them.

### Death's Last Kiss

Some Awakened feel the pull to sleep more keenly than others...eternal sleep. Indeed, magi from the Hollow One faction Death's Last Kiss are often seduced by the lure of graveyards and other haunted sites, particularly those where a tragic premature loss of life occurred. Such magi find meaning in the emptiness where Entropy, Mind, and Spirit meet, offering to ease the transition to final rest for those trapped between realms. So romanticized are these rituals that the members of Death's Last Kiss will often make love, play music, and dance after facilitating the passing of such tortured souls, finding a temporary sense of purpose in an otherwise bleakly Aware existence.

While their music is sometimes recorded and sold, the subculture surrounding these activities is often more interesting to fans of the morbid. However, the worst thing the magi in Death's Last Kiss can imagine is fame, as the Sleepers could not possibly understand the intensity of feeling that provokes such acts of spiritual charity. Of special interest to these Hollow Ones are star-crossed ghostly lovers whose romance was cruelly taken in its prime. Indeed, a few of their more ad-





vanced magi have created entire pockets of the Umbra where such spirits can reside and find union once more.

## The Orphic Circle

Outsiders call the Orphic Circle fanatics who are obsessed with ghosts. Where other paranormal investigators are skeptics, Circle members are true believers who will pay handsomely for relics, lore, informants — and no questions asked. Often, they hire ghost hunters or keep paranormal investigators on retainer to feed them more information. Most are warned away from working with the Orphic Circle, however, and several rumors about the group's *other* activities are starting to make the rounds.

Members of the Orphic Circle believe their group is ancient, and its storied history is nigh mythic. The Circle is filled with cultists who want to understand the true nature of death and will go to desperate lengths to learn anything they can. Some paranormal investigators are trying to infiltrate the Circle, hoping to put an end to rampant speculation that members are murdering people in gruesome ways to create ghosts. Others are anxious to find the relics the Circle is so obsessed with obtaining, just so they can sell them to someone — anyone — else.

## The Sons of Tertullian

The Sons of Tertullian are a sect within the Society of Leopold, a group of Catholics that harkens back to the Inquisition. The Inquisitors hold to the belief that informed their original mission, to oust heretics, and consider anyone

who speaks against God to be suspect and potentially in league with demons and invisible spirits. Though the Inquisitors share common ideas about the nature of demons, they disagree on how best to deal with ghosts. Some do feel that ghosts exist for various reasons, and those who have unfinished business need help to move on. Others suspect that all ghosts, regardless of why they exist, are a form of lesser demon and a subversion of the natural order.

While the Sons are uniquely skilled and can perform exorcisms, they often lack the ability to blend into modern society, preferring the comfort and safety of their cloistered lifestyle. What's more, members are aware that some may consider their organization antiquated and their hunts not to be taken seriously. Some Inquisitors have begun to pose as modern-day exorcists to infiltrate and work with other groups; others are hiring paranormal investigators to feed them information, hoping to uncover evidence of demonic activity.

## Spook Patrol

The Spook Patrol is always on the lookout for preternatural phenomena. Diehard fans of the Paranormal Investigation Collective, these teenagers secretly meet in basements and garages to reenact their favorite scenes, trade ghost stories gathered from internet searches, and collect junkyard trinkets that they insist will make great gear for hunts. When allowed out past curfew or lucky enough to sneak out of their houses undetected, the Spook Patrol are often seen shadowing PIC teams...much to the more mature investigators' chagrin.

Usually, PIC teams can satiate the excitement of these



youngsters by signing an autograph and pointing them in the wrong direction. However, the Spook Patrol is sometimes known to show up and come to a PIC member's aid in their moment of direst need when a hunt goes awry. The Spooks are of greatest annoyance to PIC teams when they arrive with their own terrible handheld cameras or pretend to be adult authorities such as police detectives. In truth, the Spook Patrol is sometimes good for ratings, as they appeal to the younger demographic in the fan base – and PIC teams grudgingly admit that they love the attention of their biggest fans, even when Patrol members ruin their carefully planned camera shots.

## **Terrel & Squib**

Terrel & Squib is a small out-of-body projection firm known for their ability to dispense with unwanted ghostly visitors. Primarily a drug manufacturer, the company also

contracts hunters to rid locations of apparitions for the right price. Unfortunately, the company treats these agents as expendable, often offering them little training and throwing them into the field immediately. Regardless of whether or not these agents successfully find and dispense with any ghosts, Terrel & Squib find a way to make clients pay copious amounts of cash, often claiming false alarms are true hauntings.

While considered reliable in wealthy circles, smart hunters would think twice before taking a Terrel & Squib contract, for the company's reputation among professionals is odious at best. Some hunters claim that one or both of the founding members of Terrel & Squib are under the influence of malevolent spirits themselves, although such rumors are completely unsubstantiated. Still, that doesn't stop underfunded groups from working with Terrel & Squib, because they pay quickly and the checks do clear.







# Mediums

It's easier to dismiss ghosts in the daylight.  
– Patricia Briggs, American author (1965-Present)

At its simplest, a medium is a being who is able to communicate with those who have moved beyond the Shroud — those who are, essentially, dead. Unsuspected by most living (and undead) creatures, what we refer to as “ghosts” are not a single type of entity. There are wraiths and Spectres and a medium might even inadvertently come into contact with a dread Malfean, one of the horrors who inhabit the nastier parts of the cities of the dead. Mediums are nearly always otherwise-normal humans, as mages, werewolves and vampires have their own special means of communing with the departed. The Embrace, becoming a vampire, removes the medium’s talent, though ghouls, the servitors of vampires, may retain the ability to commune with ghosts.

Some mediums are born with their ability, either manifest or latent; some develop it later in life, or learn to be mediums by their own efforts. A talent for mediumship runs in some family lines, but can develop spontaneously in individuals whose families have never before produced a medium. The experience of someone from a family of mediums will differ profoundly from that of someone who lacks such familial support and understanding of their ability. Mediums who have a living relative to guide them will have easier access to family myths and stories about the nature of the dead and the nature of their own abilities, not to mention teaching about methods

and mechanisms designed to ensure their safety when dealing with the denizens of the Shadowlands and beyond. Some may gain these benefits from a relative who is already dead, but able to assist from across the Shroud. Those who have no such family support will have to develop these safeguards for themselves, unless they can find a mentor, and mentorship in mediumship is not an easy thing to come by.

In order to retain her sanity a medium needs to make sense of what is happening to her, the sights she sees and the sounds she hears. Ghosts have their own drives and motivations for communicating with the living and not all of them are benign in their interactions, let alone truthful. The Restless are not supposed to treat with the living and, while many do break this rule (known as the Dictum Mortuum), they have to be careful to avoid coming to the attention of those who rule over them. Both these factors mean that ghosts can be dishonest or, at best, cagey when explaining the facts of their own existence and the nature of life after death. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for a medium to discern the whole truth about postmortem existence. At best she will gain small shards of truth which, being human, she will attempt to piece together into something that makes sense. What makes sense to her will depend largely upon the beliefs of her family and her society.



Most mediums will acquire a set of props which help them to contact the dead and to feel more in control of their communications. For those born into families where the talent is known, these are often heirlooms handed down from grandmother to grand-daughter, from godfather to godson. Each family will have their own set of symbolic items. Others may adopt the props of the fairground medium: crystal balls, decks of tarot cards or some other item, traditional, new age or purely individual, which helps them to focus.

Many mediums see and communicate with spirits as well as ghosts. Few understand enough about the Underworld or, for that matter, the reality of spirits to know the difference. Genuine knowledge of the Underworld is a rare commodity, even amongst those with the gift of mediumship. In Western Europe and North America, a medium will often rely upon the tropes developed by Victorian spiritualists, as these are very widely known and propagated by popular culture. The Victorian age was one of those few times when mediums could thrive within a predominantly Christian society, enjoying considerable favor and admiration.

## Mediums and Ghosts

Contact with a ghost is terrifying. Even the most skilled and experienced mediums describe a shiver down the spine and a feeling of supernatural dread as the ghost makes first contact. In time, a medium can become attuned to a particular ghost with whom she is in regular communication. However positive her feelings toward the ghost, that initial dread occurs at the beginning of every contact, dissipating when and if the medium recognizes the ghost as a friendly presence or even a spirit guide.

Beyond that, a medium's experience with a ghost is something unique to each individual. Many feel the ghost as an alien presence in their mind; an entity who does not experience the world as they do, through the five senses, but who, nonetheless, is capable of making demands upon the medium which she may find impossible to deny. A skilled medium can carry on an internal conversation with the ghost, much as all humans do when they imagine themselves in conversation with an absent friend or loved one. The major difference here is that the medium is not in control of the ghost or the answers it gives to her questions. She may hear the ghost talking in the voice it had when it was alive, but this is a voice in her head; although it is as real to her as the voice of a living person, others nearby cannot hear it.

Some ghosts will attempt to take control of the medium's body, and even her mind and soul. The medium may give in to this happily or she may put up a fight. If she beats the ghost in a contest of wills, the ghost leaves and contact with it breaks. When a ghost possesses a medium, the medium's own consciousness becomes dormant, much like it is when she is deeply asleep. She may awake to dream-like memories of

things she did when the ghost was "in charge" but she will be reliant on other observers for reliable information about her own behavior. Or, rather, what her body did when the ghost was riding her. Although possession by a ghost cannot directly change a medium's body or physical features, it can make such a massive difference in her non-verbal language and facial expression that she is scarcely recognizable as herself. Her voice changes as the ghost manipulates her lips, tongue, breath, and vocal cords. Her behavior changes; a non-smoker may demand a cigar, a vegan a rare steak or a teetotaler a gin and tonic. She may experience desires and drives that are alien to her nature. All this can be terrifying when the medium comes back to herself, and this is why religions and other social groups which invite such possession have support mechanisms for celebrants lucky enough to be the vehicle for a ghostly manifestation.

Some ghosts are able to take on a physical appearance, often looking and sounding vague and ephemeral, but not all are capable of this. There are mediums who specialize in summoning ghosts who can manifest in this way, though this is no longer as popular as it was in Victorian times. Faking is particularly common when it comes to ephemeral manifestations; the medium may produce the illusion himself or rely on an accomplice. In any case, the fact remains that in some instances, no evidence of trickery exists. There is no "natural" explanation for such manifestations and it is clear that these ghosts are real and can show themselves to the living. These genuine manifestations are rare and, obviously, of great interest to ghost hunters. The medium's experience of the manifested ghost is identical to that of other observers. She is the one the ghost wishes to be near and, although she may have seen the ghost on many occasions, few mediums ever become blasé about the experience.

## Genuine or Faking It?

Fake mediums are both a blessing and a curse to the genuinely gifted. They are a blessing in that they make it easier for a medium to hide in plain sight. They are a curse in that many, if not most, people will assume that any medium, genuine or not, is fake. Someone with a real gift may experience prejudice as society assumes she is a sham, out to con money from the vulnerable. At the same time, such assumptions do provide a measure of protection from those in the lands of the living who would exploit her mercilessly for their own aims.

There are many reasons a person might present themselves as a medium when they are not. Foremost amongst these is the good old con. A fool and his money are easily parted, and some see pretending to be in touch with the dearly departed as a particularly easy method of bringing this about. The skill set of a successful con artist is a close match with the skill set required to perform a convincing cold reading. Other fakes genuinely believe that they are able to contact and communicate with the Restless Dead. Sometimes the medium him-



self is the victim of a con, having been set up by someone he trusts who fakes manifestations from behind the scenes, wafting strange scents into the room, arranging for tapping noises and strange shadows in the window, and so on. These fake mediums are particularly convincing as they believe their ghostly partners are genuine. Then there is the thorny question of whether someone possessed by a ghost (whether this is temporary, intermittent, or permanent) is a fake medium; in some senses she is and in other senses she isn't. She certainly has contact with a ghost but she lacks control over it.

Few mediums and even fewer ghost hunters have any useful knowledge about the ways in which ghosts organize themselves in the afterlife, nor have they attempted much by way of categorizing the powers ghosts exercise. Ghosts themselves refer to their powers as Arcanoi and organize themselves into Guilds, each of which specializes in a particular type of Arcanos. There is an entire Guild of ghosts, known as the Puppeteers, who specialize in possessing living humans. They can do many things, from occupying a host's body as a mere observer to taking over their host entirely, fully possessing them. Even ghosts outside the Guild can learn these arts. Some ghosts attune a chosen human to possession, and such humans are known as Consorts. Others possess objects, physically manifest themselves or engage in poltergeist-like activity. Many ghosts who have dealings with humans have places they like to frequent, and this accounts for the haunted areas which can attract ghost hunters' interest. Puppeteers are responsible for a proportion of false mediums who, willingly or not, play to the agenda of that particular Guild. Although, in many ways, a genuine medium and a Consort are equally in touch with denizens of the Underworld, to a ghost hunter there may be little or no difference in their utility. Even someone who is neither a medium nor a Consort can be in touch with a ghost. The relationship is two sided and many ghosts are keen to contact people who were important to them in life.

Consorts, and those whom ghosts have chosen to contact on a less regular basis, lack several of the abilities of a true medium. They have no control over the dead, nor can they initiate communication with ghosts or summon them. They are, however, in some senses uniquely in touch with their personal ghosts. Which leads to an interesting question: Is a Consort a false medium, a particular sort of genuine medium, or something else entirely? To make things even more confusing, being a medium is no defense against experiencing ghostly possession. To the contrary, a ghost often finds it easier to take over the body and mind of someone who is actually capable of inviting them to do so.

For more information on ghosts, their organization and powers, please see **Wraith: The Oblivion 20th Anniversary Edition**. This information is not essential for the player or Storyteller, however, as nearly all mediums and ghost hunters are totally ignorant about the lands and experiences of the dead and most ghosts are reluctant to enlighten them.

## Mediums and Ghost Hunting

When a group of ghost hunters seek out a medium, they are usually looking for an individual who can contact the Underworld and those who inhabit the Underworld. Like the medium herself, they may have little or no insight into the realities of the lands of the dead or the nature of the entities they think of as "ghosts." They are often seeking out specific pieces of information which the medium may or may not be able to provide, and this applies even if they are employing a genuine medium who is genuinely committed to their cause.

It is not every medium who can choose which ghost she contacts. Some may find their talents confined to a particular class of ghost, such as their own ancestors; others may only be able to contact Spectres or wraiths whose agendas are not compatible with those of the hunters the medium is trying to assist. Even the most highly skilled are not always capable of contacting a specified ghost. Wraiths have their own needs and motivations and will always attempt to serve their own agendas rather than those of whoever happens to carry their voice into the Skinlands.

A ghost hunter who wants to find a genuine medium who can perform reliably as required faces an almost impossible task. Even if the hunter can establish that the medium is genuine, they still need to assure themselves of the medium's objectivity — or relative objectivity — and ability to perform the task at hand. It's no wonder ghost hunters value such mediums, when they are able to find them, and will do anything they can to keep them on board.

Fortunately, many mediums are only too happy to join forces and seek out allies, including ghost hunters. Some have the very human longing to be a valued part of a team doing something they are convinced is worthwhile. Some welcome assistance in learning about the Underworld and the nature of ghosts and the dead. Many mediums are ghost hunters themselves. Nobody can do everything and ghost hunters have equipment and skills which can augment whatever the medium possesses. Just having friends and colleagues who share a belief and interest in ghosts can be a great relief and very fulfilling to a medium who would otherwise have to go to huge lengths to justify their own usefulness in the modern world.

## Finding the Real Deal

It is not impossible to find a genuine medium by googling, scanning the classified ads in a local or national newspaper, or by dropping into one's local Spiritualist church, New Age shop or occult book store. Self-professed mediums are relatively common amongst practitioners of Vodou and other syncretic religions. It is not difficult to find a person claiming to be able to communicate with the dead; the difficulty lies in vetting them to assure oneself of their authenticity.

There is no litmus test that reliably distinguishes a genuine medium from a fake. A successful fake medium will be



a very skilled con artist. Many of them believe themselves to be genuine, so their body language (and even polygraph evidence) may not betray them. If the interviewer had access to a friendly ghost, the wraith could distinguish the real from the fake in most situations, but having access to a friendly ghost might well obviate the need for a medium in the first place.

One way of detecting a fake medium is to notice whether she tries to tell you what you want to hear. The wily and determined interviewer will set false trails and see how far the candidate chases them. For instance, if you are a Red Sox fan, wear a shirt proclaiming your support for the Dodgers. Or display a photograph of a total stranger in Victorian garb and see whether your candidate tries to contact Great Aunt Florence. These are all tricks that cold readers use. A genuine medium will not make too much of a meal out of these subtle clues, though many of them can perform a cold reading if the spirits are not in an obliging mood. A genuine medium is more likely to discuss her own limitations; a fake will try to minimize these.

Another way for a ghost hunter to determine the authenticity of a medium is to quiz the candidate on his knowledge of the lands of the dead, judging whether it accords with what the hunter knows. Fake mediums do not make a living out of telling their clients about the harsh realities of Stygia, they paint pictures of the deceased walking toward the light, reaching out to their loved ones and waiting patiently for reunion across the Shroud. The reality of post-mortem existence is somewhat different, and a genuine medium will be aware of this, though she may try to wrap it up nicely so as not to upset the client. Wraiths do, of course, sometimes wish to help those they loved when they were alive, but their motives for this are rarely completely altruistic. A genuine medium is likely to warn the hunter of the dangers of communicating with the dead, and to remind him that the dead are not always benign in their intentions towards the living.

## Payment in Kind

Having found a medium she believes to be genuine, the hunter's next task will be to get them on board. Some will work for money. It is a rare human being who can resist the promise of riches, but the medium is likely to demand a high fee. She has, by definition, a relationship with the world across the Shroud and she will not lightly put this in jeopardy. Furthermore, she will be all too aware of the damage that ghosts can do to her if she displeases them or their masters.

A medium is most likely to work with or for a ghost hunter whose aims are compatible with her own. Where their aims and values align closely, the medium may be happy to team up without any form of payment, or she may work beside the hunter as a favor, in exchange for a favor for herself in the future. The nature of that repayment will depend on the hunter's skill set. A hunter who is a cop or a lawyer could help should the medium run afoul of the law; a used car salesper-

son could ensure that the medium gets the best possible deal on an automobile. There are plenty of favors a person can do for a friend.

Mediums who do not advertise may have good reason for wanting to stay hidden, but ghost hunters can hunt mediums as well as ghosts. Mediums whose faith is bound up with their talent may be reluctant collaborators (though those employed by various churches are easy enough to find). In such cases, it is less a matter of the hunter interviewing the medium than it is of the medium interviewing the hunter. The first test the hunter will need to pass will be to prove their sincerity and the worthiness of their cause. Such mediums are unlikely to demand payment and could even take offense if money is on the table, but they will demand the utmost respect.

Mediums come from all sorts of cultural backgrounds – as, of course, do ghost hunters – and the relationship between the two vocations can be especially tricky when they come from different cultures. Some hunters have mounted expeditions to the frozen north or the forests of central Africa to find an effective shaman, only to be rejected as representatives of exploitative Western culture attempting some form of cultural appropriation.

Many mediums are ghost hunters themselves. These individuals will readily form part of a team. Rather than working for hire, they may seek out those with other useful talents to assist them in their own ghost hunting activities.

## Methodology

There are as many ways to contact ghosts as there are mediums. Each practitioner will, over the course of time, evolve her own methodology. Mentors (should the medium have been lucky enough to find one) teach some methods, others come from popular perceptions of what it is a medium does. Which raises a chicken and egg question: do crystal balls, tarot cards, trance states and the like work because the medium believes they will work, or were they adopted by popular culture in the first place because they had worked for mediums at some point in the past? Yet another unanswerable question, but a pragmatic medium takes the attitude of “if it ain't broke....”

Other mediums, particularly those brought up or trained in any of the various traditions, employ ritualized, protracted performances designed to attract a ghost or ghosts to themselves. The nature of these performances varies greatly: tribal dances, shamanic drumming, painting symbols on the floor, and using dead languages to call the departed are equally valid forms of ritual. Other mediums use drugs or sexual ecstasy to get “out of their minds” and into a state of being which is more conducive to contacting the dead. Some forms of ritual are easier to perform on a ghost hunting expedition than others, and some are entirely unsuitable for daytime television.





## Props

For a medium, whether genuine or fake, props like the crystal ball and tarot deck act as foci. By concentrating on these, the medium clears her mind of extraneous thought and enters into a state where contacting beings from other planes of existence becomes more probable. The prop can be anything that the medium finds helpful when she tries to focus. Some use mandalas, others a specific personal item.

Props can also assist in a cold reading as clients often start to come up with pertinent information when the medium gazes into the crystal and announces that the clouds are clearing. Some mediums will not do cold readings when the ghosts fail to appear, and a genuine shaman is more likely to announce that the spirits are not feeling like communicating than she is to perform a cold reading.

**Systems:** Entering a state where the medium can perceive ghosts and spirits requires a Perception + Meditation roll with a difficulty of 8 (5 if the person attempting this has the Medium Merit). A single success makes the medium aware of any ghosts or spirits in the area that are willing to reveal themselves. Instigating communication with an entity requires more successes (or alternative methods).

If the ghost or spirit is actively trying to hide, perceiving it requires a contested roll between whatever dice pool the entity uses for hiding and the medium's prop-assisted Meditation roll.

Failure here means that nothing happens, though the medium remains free to perform a cold reading.

## Talking Board

The use of a Ouija board or similar device (glass pushing, table tapping, etc.) is a common method of contacting the spirit world, in use by many mediums as well as teenagers without a scrap of mediumistic talent. When used by a skilled medium who has the ability to contact a specific entity, these methods can be extremely informative. In amateur hands they are a recipe for disaster as a demon, mischievous spirit or Spectre can use the board as easily as a helpful wraith. Things can get out of control as poltergeist activity spirals outward from the Ouija board into the environment.

**Systems:** Any use of a Ouija board or similar method is an open invitation to any disembodied entity in the immediate area who is in the mood to leave a message, play with mortals, or just terrify unwitting amateurs. Those without the medium talent can contact spirits in this way but have no means of identifying or controlling them. Inviting a specific spirit, ghost or entity and controlling its interaction with the sitters requires other abilities.

## Automatic Writing

This is similar to the use of a Ouija board except that, for the most part, only those with the medium talent or some other type of pre-existing connection with a ghost stand any chance of getting a result. Some wraiths communicate with their Consorts in this way. It doesn't have to be writing — some entities prefer to draw, paint, or play a musical instrument — the essential factor here is that the medium or Consort provides the ghost with a means of expression.



**Systems:** The medium or Consort holds a pencil, pen or other means of expression as if to use it themselves, and attempts to empty their mind of extraneous thoughts. If there is a nearby ghost or spirit who wishes to use this channel of communication, they may do so (automatic success). If a Consort's ghost is not in the mood, or if the medium wants to persuade a less willing entity to communicate, they roll Manipulation + Persuasion with a difficulty of 7. If contested rolls are in use, the entity defends with Willpower.

## Artifacts and Relics

True mediums are those who can perceive ghosts or other Shadowland denizens without effort on the part of the ghosts themselves. But what about those for whom this ability is neither innate nor acquired by long study and practice? There are a number of devices or external aids that allow people who are not mediums to perceive ghosts. To their ghost-hunting teammates (and their spirit quarry), their medium-like abilities, granted by relics or technology, are more important than whether or not they technically fulfill the definition of "medium."

### •••• Mask of the Midnight Ghosts

Priests of the dark Orisha, corrupt sorcerers from the area now known as Nigeria, craft these disturbing relics in horrible rituals. Getting one's hands on one of these ghastly objects is never easy, though they occasionally turn up in private occult collections, curio shops and yard sales. They resemble other African carvings but, unlike their ethical counterparts the Uzoma, the Nhangas do not choose a beautiful piece of wood for their carving. Instead they seek out rotting, degraded material which they paint with all manner of bodily fluids and decorate with the skins of stillborn children. Originally made to enable the evil enchanter to bring sickness and misery to a community by night, anyone (un)lucky enough to find such a mask can use it to travel, in spirit form, into the Shadowlands. The practitioner's body remains in the land of the living.

The wearer's ghost-form can reach into the living world by rolling her Willpower against the local Shroud rating. If she fails to return to her body by dawn, her body will crumble to dust and she will remain trapped forever in the Shadowlands. There, she is vulnerable to anything that would affect a wraith, but has no means of affecting any other entity she comes across. For this reason, most sources will refer to these objects as cursed by the wicked sorcerers who made them.

### ••/••• Shadow Salve

The ghost hunter may hear tell of a salve which, when applied to the eyelids, enables the wearer to see through the Shroud for a single night. There are several versions of this substance. One is known to some Native American wise women, and another to a very few Hermetic ritualists, most

of whom are now living in Poland. You can buy the salve, if you know where to look, though the price is high. You can also learn how to make it, though the price for that is even higher and involves giving yourself over as an apprentice for at least five years if all goes well.

The •• version gives 15 doses. The •••• version gives the recipe, but the ingredients are not easy to come by and include herbs that are only effective if gathered under the right astronomical conditions. Assembling the ingredients can be a mission in and of itself.

### ••• Shaman's Drum

These come in many forms, shapes and sizes depending on their origin. The one thing they have in common is that a shaman has made them for the purpose of communing with spirits. Shamans are, on the whole, reluctant to part with their drums, though they may hand one over to a favored apprentice until he has made his own. They sometimes fall into the hands of friends or relatives and form part of the shaman's estate so, if the family does not recognize the value of the drum, it can end up in a bric-a-brac shop or yard sale.

Beating the correct rhythm on the drum reduces the local Shroud rating by 1 for every 15 minutes spent drumming without error. Roll Dexterity + Expression, difficulty 6. The number of successes determines how many 15-minute increments the drummer can keep up the required rhythm. If the drummer stops drumming for any reason, any remaining successes are lost. Once the drumming stops, the Shroud recovers its previous rating at the rate of 1 level per hour. The Shroud rating can never be dropped below 4 by this method.

### •• Effective Grimoire

These are ridiculously hard to come by. Not many exist, and those that do are heavily valued and guarded by those who possess them. Such a grimoire is useful to a Hermetic ritualist as it reduces the difficulty of rolls to affect ghosts using Hermetic rituals by 1. There are rumors of Bibles with equivalent properties somewhere in the vaults of the Vatican.

### • Kirlian Camera

These items are readily available on the internet and allow the user to photograph coronal discharges, otherwise known as auras. The aura of a human being Skinridden has aberrations recognizable to anyone who has studied Kirlian photography. Some experts in the field can also detect tell-tale signs that a ghost inhabits a machine or computer.

There are a couple of problems for any ghost hunter wishing to make use of one of these cameras. Firstly, development of the prints takes time, time during which the ghost might decide to move on. Secondly, interpretation of the films is an extremely specific skill that takes time and study to learn. Unless the ghost hunter has taken Kirlian photography as a specialty on one of their Skills or Knowledges (e.g. Occult,



Crafts or Science) they will not be able to interpret the Kirlian photographs correctly, although sometimes they might make a lucky guess.

## Rituals

Anyone can perform a ritual to conjure, command and communicate with the dead. Mediums are more likely to succeed. When dealing with the Restless, a great deal depends on the wraith's own motivation and the way in which the ghost understands the ritualist's intent. A ghost will never go willingly to its own destruction, but if it believes that the ritualist might be able to pass on a message, or that compliance will protect its Fetters, it is likely to oblige.

Rituals use symbolism and imagery associated with the practitioner's belief system; a Christian exorcist will use bell, book and candle, a shaman might drum herself into a trance. The success or failure of a ritual depends less on the nature of the ritual than it does on the ritualist's faith in its efficacy. Whatever form the ritual takes, the system remains the same.

## Summoning

Summoning a ghost persuades or forces it to come to the practitioner. This does not mean it will do what the medium wants after it arrives. A ghost is more likely to obey the summons if the conjurer incorporates something important to it into their ritual. This would usually be an object, person or place that was important to the ghost when they were alive. It is only possible to summon a ghost which happens to be in the Underworld at the time the ritual takes place. The longer a ghost has been dead, the less likely it is to be in the Underworld. If the summoned entity is not in the Underworld, the ritual automatically fails.

Note: Zukal family mediums use a different system (see below).

**Systems:** The summoner spends a Willpower point and conducts the summoning ritual, then rolls Charisma + Occult (difficulty variable).

The base difficulty for this roll is 10. The following factors reduce the difficulty:

- The summoner possesses an object important to the ghost in life (-1). If the significant object is one of the wraith's Fetters, the summoner also gains two automatic successes.
- A person important to the ghost is present (-1).
- The summoning takes place in the ghost's former home (-1).
- A Hermetic or other Western Mystery ritualist is using an effective grimoire (-1).
- The summoning occurs in a place where the Shroud is thin (-2).

A medium enjoys a two-die bonus plus a dice bonus equal to the number of dots they have in the Talented Summoner Merit to their roll.

Each success rolled holds the ghost in place for one minute; spending a further Willpower point doubles the amount of time it stays.

Failure means that the ghost is not available or does not arrive.

A botch results in the ghost possessing the summoner or another random person or object in the immediate area.

## Commanding

Having summoned a ghost, a ritualist may attempt to command the ghost to perform an action or answer a question. It is only possible to command one action per summoning, though a single command will (if successful) compel the ghost to answer multiple questions as truthfully as the ghost is able.

This does not require expenditure of Willpower or the performance of a different ritual – it is connected to the summoning ritual. However, it is possible to summon a ghost successfully and still have it refuse to answer questions truthfully or do what the conjuror requires.

**Systems:** The conjuror rolls Charisma + Occult (difficulty 7). If the character is a medium, they get two automatic successes. Success allows the character to give the ghost one simple command, or the conjuror may ask one question per success.

Failure means the conjuror may ask or command as he likes, but the ghost does not have to comply. With a botch, the ghost will accept the command but attempt to undermine it or will deliberately give misleading information in response to questions.

However strong the command, a ghost cannot perform a task which is outside its ability, nor can a ghost respond truthfully to a question when it does not know the answer. It is the conjuror's responsibility to ask only what is achievable.

## Exorcism

A successful exorcism results in the ghost leaving the person, object or place it was haunting or possessing. It may return to the Underworld or it may find another person, object, or place to occupy. Anyone can attempt to exorcise a ghost but, as with summoning, mediums get an advantage.

Note: Zukal family mediums use a different system (see pg. 91).

**Systems:** Any attempt to dislodge a ghost requires the expenditure of a point of Willpower followed by the performance of a lengthy and exhausting ritual in line with the ritualist's cultural values and beliefs. To determine the success of the ritual, make a Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty equal to the ghost's Willpower + 3, maximum of 9); this is an extended roll, requiring a number of successes equal to twice the ghost's Willpower.



Any medium gets two automatic success. Mediums with the Talented Exorcist Merit benefit from a dice bonus equal to their dots in the Merit to every roll.

If any roll results in a botch, the ritualist must start over, and spend a further point of Willpower.

## Warding

A successful warding protects an area from ghostly incursions for a variable amount of time. Any person or object within this area will also enjoy protection from possession, though that will drop if they leave the warded area.

**Systems:** The ritualist spends a Willpower point and conducts a warding ritual. A successful Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 7) prevents ghosts from entering a room-sized area. A medium enjoys a two-dice bonus for this roll plus a dice bonus equal to the number of dots they have in the Talented Warder Merit. This effect lasts for a number of weeks equal to the number of successes.

On a failure, the warding does not happen. A botch results in a wraith deciding to haunt the area the ritualist attempted to ward.

# Belief Systems and Iconographies

There are many belief systems that acknowledge the existence of ghosts. Some of these have traditional methods for dealing with ghosts, most of which will work whether or not the practitioner has the medium talent. Mediums, of course, have an advantage in all dealings with ghosts. Training in any of these systems is of great benefit to a medium as it gives her a structure upon which she can hang, define, and take control of her experiences. All of these beliefs can give rise to rituals to summon and affect ghosts.

## Christian Exorcists

Not every medium is an exorcist and not every exorcist is a medium. Some individuals, however, are both. There are factions of ghost hunters whose aim is to drive ghosts out of areas they haunt, and there is a clear (though specialized) need to drive ghosts and other entities out of people they are possessing, especially when they drive their hosts to behave in an undesirable manner.

The exorcist believes that whatever is possessing a person is inherently evil or, at the very least, in the wrong place. He seeks to drive it out. This does not destroy the ghost or spirit, but it does cause it to go elsewhere, either back to the Underworld or into another person or object. The Roman Catholic Church continues to authorize exorcism, though the rules around this changed as recently as 1999 because of the rise in maverick priests performing exorcisms inspired by the movie *The Exorcist*. According to the Vatican only an ordained priest

may perform the ritual, though, as every diocese must employ at least one priest trained in exorcism, it is not difficult to track one down. Before the priest consents to exorcise a person, he must work with medical professionals to ensure that the individual has no physical or mental illness that might account for their behavior. The Vatican lays down criteria for determining whether a person is the subject of demonic possession and a priest will not act unless the subject meets these criteria. Most people possessed by ghosts will meet the criteria, which include:

- A cold feeling in the room in which the subject is present
- Knowledge of things that are distant or hidden
- Change in the subject's voice

Once the priest is confident that the subject truly houses a demon, the victim will be restrained so that she can't hurt herself, the priest, or other bystanders. The priest will pray over her, using prayers that are familiar to every Catholic: the Pater Noster, Ave Maria, and recitations of the Athanasian Creed. The priest may use incense and holy water, both of which he believes will repel demons.

An exorcist is unlikely to summon a ghost but might well ward an area.

Many other Christian churches support exorcists and some have less stringent criteria. Pentecostal churches will perform deliverance ceremonies on those who are not "wholly possessed" but who only show some signs of possession. It takes a person with the ability to discern spirits (i.e. a medium) to detect those signs of possession and, while the medium may not perform the exorcism herself, she can direct the exorcist to the appropriate subject. Some Pentecostals view mediumship as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Typically, a Christian exorcist will use the traditional bell, book and candle. He may also utilize holy water and incense to purify a person or an area.

## Shamanism

Shamanism is not a religion, it is a methodology which involves having traffic with spirits, some of which are ghosts and some of which are not. Although the peoples who traveled across the frozen strait from Siberia to the Americas may have utilized some shamanistic practices, many modern Native Americans reject the label for their traditional beliefs, believing that its use as a descriptor is due to a misunderstanding and denigration of non-European cultures. This may well have come about due to understandable resentment of cultural appropriation. While native-born women work their fingers to the bone making dream catchers on the reservations, rich white women learn to make these items as a craft, for fun, and some even sell their efforts. If a ghost hunter or medium wishes the assistance of a Native American wise man or woman, they should treat that person with respect and avoid using the word "shaman" or "shamanism."



## Modern Shamanistic Cultures

The word shaman is of Central Asian origin and, strictly speaking, is not applicable to cultures in other locations. Shamanistic beliefs and practices, however, or beliefs and practices which are similar in nature to those encountered in the Siberian region, persist on every continent. Shamanism was common in Northern Europe before Christian missionaries arrived and did their best to wipe older belief systems from the face of the planet. In more secular modern times, however, many are seeking to return to their roots, and those who worked long and hard to keep those roots alive are coming into their own. A medium who is born into or who can gain access to one of these cultures may be able to find a mentor. While a medium of the "wrong" ethnicity may find it harder to gain acceptance, it is not impossible for a seeker who can demonstrate sincerity to be taken on by a teacher. Some mediums make long, arduous journeys to find a shaman who will tutor them in the art of communion with spirits.

Many New Age spiritual people have adopted shamanistic practices, borrowing bits of culture in an eclectic manner. While purists might not approve, these practices can be an effective means of communicating with the spirits of the dead.

In terms of ritual, a shaman is more likely to think of communing with a ghost or a spirit than she is to think about "summoning." Many refer to this as a spirit journey. The process is fundamentally cooperative. The shaman prepares and purifies herself, and then goes into a trance.

Shamans use various means of inducing the trance. Some will flagellate or pierce themselves (the latter being common in Central American traditions), some will intoxicate themselves with drugs (such as peyote) or alcohol, and drumming and dance are common. Once they enter the trance state, a shaman is open to communion with any ghost or spirit who happens to be around. Calling up an individual ghost or spirit is not a customary practice, although some shamans who also have the medium talent have worked out ways of doing this, mostly by surrounding themselves with objects associated with the desired entity. Many shamans have spirit guides, but these are more likely to be spirits than wraiths.

It is rare for a shaman to command a ghost or spirit; they have too much respect for the otherworldly being to do that. Instead they will cajole, often promising favors in return. Many wraiths will take advantage of this. Having a living shaman carry out their wishes or protect their Fetters is worth the time it takes to answer a few questions or promise to bring rain. Bringing rain is, of course, beyond the ability of a wraith. Not every shaman, however, is aware of that.

A shaman will often be called upon to remove "evil spirits" from a place, object or person. The ritual for doing this often involves dosing the unfortunate Skinridden person with natural medicines (which may have hallucinatory effects), and purifying the victim with smoke, incense or running water. A shaman is more likely to think of this as healing than exorcism; the removal of evil spirits is how shamans explain their ability to cure illnesses. As they use naturally occurring drugs in the form of herbs, leaves, and pulverized bark, their cures are often effective.

As shamans operate in close cooperation with spirits, warding an area is not something they will generally attempt.

## Western Hermetic Traditions

This tradition arose from the teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus. Rediscovery of his writings during the Renaissance led to the development of schools of magic and philosophy by men such as Marsilio Ficino, Giordano Bruno and Pico della Mirandola. The boundaries between religion, magic and science were thin at that time and some of the work of the Hermeticists formed the basis of what was to become the scientific method. Hermeticism became involved with Freemasonry during the Protestant Reformation and both of these fed heavily into the philosophy of the Golden Dawn and other, less famous, magical orders of Victorian days.

While Hermeticism does not specifically concern itself with ghosts, hermetic writings and instructional manuals are freely available in bookshops, libraries and on the internet. Some mediums will study these as a means of getting control over their talent and over the ghosts who plague them. It is also possible for ghost hunters without the medium ability to deal with ghosts via suitable rituals. Effective Grimoires (see below) assist practitioners of these traditions, though these are difficult to come by.

One fundamental principle of Hermeticism is "as above, so below." So, if a medium or ghost hunter who follows this tradition wishes to deal with a ghost, they will surround themselves with those items and symbols they associate with the entity they wish to attract. While a Thelemite and a Chaos magician may seem quite different on the surface, both will utilize this principle of attraction. Another feature of this tradition is that it is very anthropocentric. Hermeticists consider humans to be a prime motivational force in the universe and the practitioner will seek to impose her will upon reality.

In order to deal with a ghost or other unseen entity, the ritualist draws a circle on the ground and performs a banishing ritual to ward the area within it. A Thelemite will use the lesser banishing ritual of the pentagram, intoning phrases,



and censuring each of the cardinal points with incense. A Chaos magician will dispense with the props and merely intone a vowel at each of the points, and the final one in the center of the circle. If she intends to summon a ghost, the ritualist draws a triangle outside the warded circle. This is where the ghost will manifest. The ritual space will contain anything the ritualist feels might attract the required entity. Apart from items that are important to the ghost itself, these will often include cloths and vestments of the color the ritualist associates with that entity, suitable implements, and gemstones. For instance, if the ritualist is trying to summon a dead soldier, red would be the predominant color and martial music would provide the soundtrack.

The ritualist then calls upon friendly powers to assist her, often in an ancient language, though some prefer the vernacular. These incantations tend to be long, convoluted, and difficult to remember. She may read from a grimoire to aid her memory but this will only affect the summoning if it is an Effective Grimoire. A magician in the Golden Dawn tradition will call upon the Angels and Archangels, a Chaos magician may just hum.

Once a ghost answers the summoning, it must remain within the triangle until the summoner releases it. Once she has trapped a ghost the ritualist may attempt to issue commands or require it to answer questions. The language used is typically flowery and archaic, but the Western Mystery ritualist will always take the attitude that she is firmly in charge of the situation. She issues her commands and questions with a confidence bordering upon arrogance.

To end the session, the practitioner gives the ghost license to depart. This is usually quite simple and most ghosts are happy to oblige. What the ghost does after its release is a different matter.

## Syncretic Religions of Central and South America

The colonizers and conquerors of the Americas imported a huge number of people as slaves from Africa, mostly West Africa. Naturally they brought their own religion and spirituality with them, but their owners forced them to convert to Christianity. In areas conquered by the Spanish and Portuguese, the conversion was to Catholicism. People being people, the new converts perceived parallels between their original African spiritual beliefs and new Christian beliefs. Thus the syncretic religions like Vodoun, Santeria, Candomblé and Umbanda were born. These religions identify the Orisha or loa, the godlike spirits, with Catholic Saints. Some, like the Umbanda of Brazil, also have strong parallels with Victorian and early 20th-century spiritualism and deal with the spirits of the dead.

The general methodology for summoning (or, to be more accurate in these religions, invoking) a ghost is to have a group of people singing and dancing. Practitioners of Um-

banda always perform invocations in Portuguese and use a strict sequence of hymns to summon ghosts and other otherworldly beings. If the summoning is successful, one or more of these beings will skin ride or possess one or more of those present at the ceremony. Followers of Umbanda recognize several types of ghosts and distinguish them by the actions they take when in possession:

- Preto Velho are the ghosts of slaves, often Yoruba priests. They have difficulty walking, drink coffee and smoke pipes. They are compassionate and sought out for healing, having deep knowledge of herbal cures.
- Baianos are ghosts of more recent Umbanda ancestors who speak slowly, drink coconut water and smoke cigarettes. They talk of the difficulties of life and how to overcome and learn from them.
- Boiadeiros are the ghosts of gauchos who speak of love and assist with purification.
- Marujos are ghosts of sailors. They drink rum and stand as if on a rolling ship.

There are also evil spirits called Kiumbas. Should these possess a medium, the celebrants will send them off to higher planes for purification.

At the end of the ceremony the practitioners perform the same hymns, starting with the last and ending with the first. This disperses the ghosts and readies everyone for a return to normal reality.

It is not entirely dissimilar from what occurs at some Christian fundamentalist prayer meetings when some amongst the congregation have an illness or disability healed, or start to speak in tongues.

These traditions are really not about commanding ghosts; rather, participants may ask the occupying ghost or spirit for advice. Many ghosts in this situation give consultations, helping people to solve their problems, heal their hurts and cure their diseases. These possessing spirits demand and receive the deepest possible respect.

## Spiritualism

Modern spiritualism began in 1848 when the Fox sisters in New York gave a number of very convincing seances. Forty years later, the two younger sisters confessed that they had faked the whole thing, but became victims of their older sibling's expert branding and management of their so-called talent. Despite this, the spiritualist movement continued to gain momentum and, of course, even though the Fox sisters may have been fakes (they later tried to recant their confessions), this does not imply that all mediums within the spiritualist movement were fakes.

The practice of spiritualism gained considerable popularity in England and English-speaking areas of the Americas between the mid-19th and early 20th century. It was particularly attractive to middle-class and wealthy women, many of



whom were also active in reform movements such as women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery. There has never been much unity among the various spiritualist churches, each of which has its own dogma, order of service and administrative functions. What unifies them is the belief that the individual personality survives death, continues to evolve, and exists on a higher plane of reality. They believe that it is not only possible but also desirable to communicate with these beings via mediumship. Those who have moved on may become spirit guides, able and willing to promote the spiritual growth of those still in the lands of the living.

The various spiritualist churches and societies rely upon mediums to bring messages and guidance from the higher planes, and they use many methods to facilitate this. Commonly a medium will enter a trance state and speak with the voice of her guide or a deceased loved one of someone in the congregation. Some spiritualist mediums use automatic writing or drawing. Interpreting knockings (one rap for yes, two for no), Ouija boards and other means that allow the departed to express themselves remain popular. These days, though, it is most common for a medium to enter a meditative state and allow the ghost either to speak through her or to inspire her to speak with her own voice.

Numerous exposures and confessions of fake mediums harmed the movement's reputation but failed to wipe it out. Many of those who investigated spiritualist mediums were so

convinced by their genuine nature that they joined the movement themselves, becoming some of its greatest advocates.

Spiritualists, on the whole, do not go in for elaborate ritual. A typical service consists of hymns and prayers followed by a talk from a medium, or, perhaps more accurately, a spirit guide speaking through the medium. The imagery tends to be Christian, and very "low church" at that. The spirits of the dead, they feel, should speak for themselves.

## Mediums on the Hunt

Hunters of all sorts stalk their prey predominantly through sensory input. Many species, including humans, rely mostly on visual cues to locate their targets. Others rely on sound, odor, or even touch and taste. Werewolves have such acute senses that they say that the best trackers amongst them are able to feel their victim's footsteps through the ground from as far as a mile away. No matter how well-honed, however, sensory techniques are useless when one's targets are invisible, intangible, and in fact exist in an entirely different plane of reality from the hunters themselves.

Obviously, this means that hunting ghosts involves challenges that other prey do not present. Most ghost hunters must rely on some sort of assistance in order to sense (and thus hunt) their targets, or simply wait for their quarry to choose to manifest in some perceivable manner in the physical





world. Some ghost hunters, however, are blessed (or cursed) with the ability to perceive ghosts directly. These mediums are capable of seeing, hearing, or otherwise sensing ghosts even when the normally-incorporeal entity is not attempting to manifest. While not all mediums are ghost hunters, they can certainly provide ghost hunting teams with an incomparable advantage over those who are, essentially, blind to their targets' existence.

Typically, the medium in a team of ghost hunters will act as a spotter or information gatherer. Most hunters will be unable to see ghosts (unless the ghost wishes to reveal itself), so a medium can point out the ghost's position. The medium can also communicate with the ghost. If the team are investigating a reputedly haunted area, the medium can attempt to contact the ghost or ghosts responsible for the eeriness of the place. Assuming the issue here is a ghost and that the medium manages to contact it, she can then ask the ghost why it is haunting. This can be of great assistance as the team can then work out how to stop the haunting, capture it on film, or tap into its energy.

So, why would a medium become a ghost hunter, or join a group of ghost hunters? And how would a ghost hunter without the medium talent go about persuading one to join his team? The answer to both those questions is "It depends." It depends on the nature and belief system of both the medium and the ghost hunter(s) concerned. Sometimes the aims of the medium and those of the ghost hunter will coincide so that cooperation comes naturally, sometimes they will conflict, and sometimes the medium will be happy enough to work for the ghost hunter as a professional contractor in exchange for a generous stipend.

Some ghost hunters work alone, some assemble a team, and some join larger organizations that may bring together teams of hunters from across the globe. On the whole though, ghost hunters tend to have one of four basic motivations:

- search for knowledge and understanding, or recognition that ghosts exist
- desire for power
- drive to destroy ghosts
- adrenaline junkies (maybe that should be ephemera junkies) who hunt ghosts for kicks

These are not exclusive categories and a hunter may have mixed motives. A hunter who desires power or hunts ghosts for kicks may seek knowledge first as a weapon to use against their ephemeral foes. What starts as idle curiosity and thrill-seeking may end up as serious academic study of ghosts and their habits.

## Knowledge Seekers

Ghost hunters who seek knowledge of existence beyond the Shroud are, perhaps, those who get on best with mediums. Most of the Benandanti are keen to expand their knowledge

and it would be possible to persuade them to join ghost hunters on a knowledge-seeking mission. Of their various factions the Redeemers are the most likely to be interested. Mediums brought up or initiated into a cultural matrix where talking to ghosts is, if not the norm, at least acceptable may also be interested, but it would be necessary for the hunter to exercise cultural sensitivity in this, accepting and respecting the medium and her beliefs for what they are and not treating her like a lesser being, the hired help or an exotic specimen. Mediums with this background are normally more ready to work with those who share their culture and beliefs but, as long as they receive respect and the hunters' aims are in line with their own beliefs, they may well join a group. Such mediums are more likely to ask for a return favor than cold, hard cash, though norms do vary between different cultural groups.

Hunters seeking knowledge often attract the kind of medium who is under the control of a Puppeteer who would be happy to pass on her own personal perceptions of the Underworld. They can also very easily be deceived by fake mediums, particularly those with enough knowledge to fake a séance convincingly.

In the event that a ghost hunter or group of hunters manages to contract a genuine medium, of whatever stripe, they should be in a position to work very well together; the medium can seek out answers to their questions from any Restless they manage to contact. As ever, though, the wraith is theoretically bound by the Dictum Mortuum. On top of that, the wraith, even if it wishes to be truthful, can only tell the truth from its own perspective. Of course, if the entity contacted happens to be a Spectre rather than a wraith...all Hell could break loose.

## Power Seekers

Few mediums from the known families and even fewer who come from cultures where mediumship is highly valued would wish to work with ghost hunters like those from the Paranormal Research Wing of the Alternate Energy Group. The work of hunters in that organization has to do with capturing wraiths and attempting to derive energy from them. Although they have had little success to date, it seems reasonable to suppose that, from a wraith's point of view, capture by this group is not all that different from falling into Oblivion.

Some mediums who grew up in isolation and have had little training in the ways of the dead might be willing to work with them if the pay is good enough, as might some who are the witting or unwitting puppets of Spectres. If capturing and draining ghosts in this way were a route to their actual destruction, the Damnation Theorists of the Benandanti would promote such groups with enthusiasm. Indeed, there are some Benandanti in these organizations, but not all Damnation Theorists approve of using ghostly energy for anything, as many argue that it is hopelessly contaminated and a risk to any who come into contact with it.



## Ghost Destroyers

As with power seekers, few trained mediums would wish to work with those whose main motivation is to destroy ghosts. Though, to be honest, some Benandanti Damnation Theorists have been the power behind the formation of such groups. Other mediums who would work well with these groups are those who have reason to hate or distrust ghosts, such as those who have been Skinridden by ghosts who made them commit acts that they find repellent. This might have been a Spectre or it might simply have been a wraith with a different morality from that of the mortal they rode. Additionally, being a medium is no proof against avarice, and there are some mediums who will do anything for pay. Being a medium does nothing to protect you from blackmail or other threats, and mediums have been forced to work toward the destruction of ghosts against their will.

It is important to remember that exorcising a ghost is not the same as destroying it. Once detached from the person, place, or object it was haunting, a ghost will return to the state it was in before forming the attachment. Destroying a ghost permanently involves throwing it into Oblivion, which is something few mediums understand how to do. A medium could, of course, work to deliver a wraith into the hands of a Spectre, but that would require a specific set of circumstances and an individual medium with specific motivations and talents.

Destroying ghosts is outside the competence of nearly all mediums, though that would not necessarily stop them from trying. Fortunately, perhaps, few ghost hunters are aware of this limitation. Even if they were, a medium would still be useful as he could pinpoint the positions of entities the hunters could not see, allowing them to target the hapless wraiths.

Just like some mediums and some people of faith, some ghost hunters desire to exorcise or remove ghosts from a person or a place rather than destroying them outright. Exorcists have their own ways of dealing with ghosts (see above) but a ghost hunter is in no way confined to these, as many mediums of differing beliefs are capable of abjuring a ghost to depart.

## Thrill Seekers

Some people seek out ghosts for kicks. That might seem weird, but what kid can resist going to that haunted house at the end of the street? Does one adolescent never challenge another to spend a night in the haunted museum or graveyard? In addition to those timeless challenges, reality television shows bring ghost hunters to places that are reputedly haunted, replete with massive camera crews, make-up artists and gadgets which, they claim, will reveal the presence of the restless dead. These shows often feature celebrities and are popular with audiences worldwide. Few, however, have come into contact with a genuine ghost.

Why would a genuine medium want to work with a reality show? Well, why would any person want to work with such

a show? Money and 15 minutes (or more) of fame motivate some mediums, just like they can motivate any other individual. By working with these shows a medium can make a reputation for herself, and can then go on to take other commissions, monetize her blog, and revel in her avid followers. What is unlikely to happen on these shows, however, is the manifestation of an actual wraith. Most mediums with the power to command a manifestation are aware that the degree of publicity surrounding these shows is all too liable to scare the ghosts away. It would be an extremely public breach of the Dictum Mortuum and would land the wraith in a whole lot more trouble than it is worth.

## Hunting the Unexpected

There are more things than wraiths in the World of Darkness and a lot of them are very creepy indeed. A medium might find they have been engaged to assist with the investigation of a Nosferatu warren or a meeting place frequented by Euthanatos mages. Several ghost hunters are known to have followed unfortunate Sluagh for extended periods of time, even managing to capture one wilder “disappearing” on camera. The tendency for that particular kith to wear anachronistic clothing, their typical pallor, and the ability to disappear have led to Sluagh being mistaken for ghosts on a number of occasions with, in at least one case, fatal consequences for the grump in question.

That is one side of the equation. On the other hand, unfortunate is the ghost hunter who peers too closely into the affairs of vampires. One group of five who followed a mysteriously shrouded figure into the sewers suffered a terrible fate. A municipal worker found two of them floating face down in the effluent. One is still missing, and the final member of the party was in psychiatric care right up to the time of his death ten years after the original incident. His family were too distressed by his ramblings (about monstrous bloodsuckers living beneath the sewers) to continue to visit him. The police never solved the case and, in the end, the coroner put the deaths down to exsanguination by pet barracuda released into the drainage system.

There are also spirits. Nearly all ghost hunters and the vast majority of mediums are unaware of the differences between a ghost and a spirit. Although they come from different realms and have completely different agendas and motivations, they do look somewhat similar when they manifest, and their powers overlap enough to be easily confused by the uneducated. Some spirits might delight in leading the ghost hunter on a merry dance. Does it really make a difference? The average ghost hunter will get precisely the same value from interaction with a spirit as he would from interaction with a ghost — unless he is a seeker of truth, and even then he could learn something.

Spirits and communication with spirits are a werewolf thing, and ghost hunters who inadvertently interfere with the



spirit balance of an area could find themselves coming into conflict with these other powerful supernatural beings as well.

## Learning to be a Medium

As with any other talent, many assume that mediums are born, not made, and no one born without the latent talent can develop it. As with any other nature/nurture controversy, it is impossible to prove this either way. Take for an example a boy child born with a caul. Unless he is unhooded by a Benandante, will he develop into a medium? Well, he might, even if denied a conducive environment, or he may never learn the way of it. As another example, Walter Ross was unaware of ghosts until he was in a near-fatal car accident on a notorious stretch of road near Springfield, Ohio. As the paramedics attended to him, he felt himself slipping through the Shroud, after which he had a variety of strange experiences, culminating with the clear memory of passing back through the Shroud into the lands of the living with a nurse yelling, "Stay with us, stay with us now Walter" into his ear. He made a good recovery (apart from his legs; he will always need to use a wheelchair) and now has a reputation in certain circles as a formidable medium. And, while this is rare for a genuine medium, he has written books about his experience and appeared on prime-time television to talk about it. Several members of the medium families, ghost hunters, and shamans have made discreet enquiries into his background and activities. As far as anyone can tell, he is genuine. Not everyone thinks he is putting the talent to its best use (Walter likes to say, "I lost my legs but I made my fortune"), but no one knows whether the talent lay latent in him prior to his accident.

There are certainly those who believe mediumship is a skill that one can study successfully with a living teacher. There are even some genuine teachers out there. Some of them ask for money, some of them ask for service, some of them ask for nothing and get loyalty and love in return. Their teaching methods are as various as the teachers themselves and, as ever, deeply dependent on the teacher's own background, beliefs, and cultural matrix. Carlos Castaneda's well-publicized adventures with the Yaqui way of knowledge as taught by Don Juan are one example, certainly well known to many of those who grew up in the 1960s. Castaneda was not, perhaps, the most apt of pupils, but Don Juan did his best to teach. Would such teaching only achieve success with a pupil with inborn potential for the talent? Or could it (or something similar) produce mediumship in a perfectly mundane mortal?

## Orphans and Boardwalk Mediums

Some mediums born with the talent or who develop it in childhood learn early on that parents, psychologists, and others

who are blind to ghosts may not react positively to even the most undeniable proof of an existence beyond the Shroud. In human society, the price paid for deviations from standard perceptions is often suspicion, ostracism, and even death. This, of course, is not true for all societies, some of which value traits that in a WASP family would get a child sent straight into therapy. However, a child whose nearest and dearest fail to appreciate their talent, and who is not fortunate enough to find a mentor will struggle with their own ability and try to mask it as best they can. Such mediums have a hard ride through life and often find it difficult to form any kind of relationship at all.

Luke Hayward was such a child, lonely and misunderstood; his family regarded him as a failure after three expensive psychiatrists failed to cure him of his tendency to believe in and talk to entities that, according to his parents, did not exist. Ostracized by friends and family, he resorted to comfort eating which only made things worse. He was, however, fascinated by TV-based ghost hunters and, on reaching puberty, wrote long, involved fan letters describing his experiences with those from across the Shroud and begging for a chance to assist his television heroes in their endeavors. Six years later, a TV team took pity on the unfortunate youth and invited him into the studio. At the age of 18, Luke became an overnight success and has become a celebrity in his own right. His family still do not understand him and believe him to be a fake. Luke isn't so sure, but he certainly brings a fresh dimension to the TV ghost hunting scene. He also has a huge social media following. Luke is not sure how he feels about all this and, while he enjoys the wealth, fast cars, groupies, and designer drugs that fame and fortune bring, he suffers horribly from impostor syndrome. He doesn't think he deserves any of it. Nor do his family, who think he will come to a bad end.

Many mediums in Luke's position do not enjoy such privileges. Most continue to hide their light under a bushel. They think that the reality TV-based ghost hunters talk a load of baloney and would, surely, give them a piece of their mind if they had the courage to do so. Most wander from place to place (some call them "boardwalk" or "orphaned" mediums) never really finding a niche. As such they could be immensely helpful to any sincere ghost hunter who was prepared to make the effort to earn their trust. These "orphaned" mediums have spent their lives heretofore in social isolation, rejected by their families, disbelieved by their therapists, horribly teased at school, ostracized, and condemned by conventional religious groups; they have never had a sense of being part of a community. They put up barriers to protect themselves from hurt. So, if a ghost hunter or group manages to break through those barriers and give the orphaned medium a sense of belonging, there is a very real danger that the medium will become dependent upon that hunter or group. Some hunters might regard that as a disadvantage, but having a medium who will do more or less anything to be part of your group or community could equally well prove to be an advantage to someone hoping to exploit their talent.





So, is a medium born or made? How long is a piece of string? Some questions do not have unambiguous answers.

## Innate Abilities

A mediums who is born able to perceive ghosts and communicate with them is unlikely to realize most other people lack this ability until they mature enough to develop a sense of themselves as a separate being. The tiny baby medium will perceive ghosts exactly the same way as he perceives his parents, his siblings, and his toys. A perceptive parent or sibling might notice the young medium looking at something that is not there but, unless there is a tradition of mediumship in the family, it is not likely they would attribute any great significance to this.

As the child matures, two things are likely to happen. Firstly, it becomes more likely their abilities will become of interest to a broader variety of ghosts, with all of the confusion, conflict, and chaos that brings. Communication is a two-way process and ghosts will use infant mediums as a gateway to the living world. Secondly, unless the child is from a family which understands and values their talent, seeing and hearing things their relatives cannot usually spawns enough of a reaction for the child to recognize something strange is going on. A child medium may not realize there's anything weird about seeing a grandparent who died before they were born, or the man down the street who disappeared after his house burned down. But when they talk about it to others, they quickly learn Mom and Dad get really uncomfortable around mention of seeing Grandma at the foot of their bed, or helping Mister Johnson find a new home for his old dog who has

been wandering the neighborhood since the fire. It's hard for kids to cope with this; comparing one's experiences to those of others is an important part of learning to be part of a community, and child mediums growing up in mainstream cultures may have profound difficulties with this.

While those who are born mediums may find their situation becomes more difficult as they age, at least they've had time to attempt to find ways to mentally and emotionally deal with the challenges before them. For those who develop their abilities later in life, discovering an ability to see ghosts is as unexpected and seemingly impossible as sprouting wings. In those predisposed to the potential, the hormonal changes of puberty, or the emotional extremes that often accompany this stage in human development, can trigger the powers of mediumship. Some wraiths can even sense this un-awakened potential in dormant mediums and go out of their way to trigger as much conflict for their targets as possible, hoping to speed up the inevitable metamorphosis and perhaps gain a vehicle to accomplish their own agendas. It must be very disturbing for a family to see their child ridden by a Spectre, so it is not surprising that the most loving of parents would wish to see their offspring "cured" of this frightening condition.

In some cases, assistance coping with the dead comes from across the Shroud. While the prohibitions against dealing with the Skinlands and its citizens are far from trivial, ghosts may use information as a bargaining chip with mediums in order to convince the living to perform tasks the dead cannot complete themselves. While some might fear they were giving up their last grasp on sanity by listening to the apparitions everyone around them insists cannot be real, desperation breeds strange bedfellows.



Ghosts may also, intentionally or inadvertently, tip off other mediums to an untrained talent's presence. A careless word here or there may alert one medium to the fact that "their" ghostly contact has been talking to another medium, which may well be enough to start the more experienced medium toward seeking out the uneducated one. Or, part of the bargain a medium strikes with a wraith might include raising the alert whenever their otherworldly contact encounters a living soul who can perceive them as well.

Why would one medium seek out a less experienced one? In some cases, it is for altruistic purposes. Those who have endured the trauma and pain of thinking they are crazy for hearing voices from beyond the Shroud may wish to help others avoid that hardship themselves. Some might like the increased status they believe that having an apprentice will bring, and some just want to pass on their knowledge and experience while they are still breathing.

Some mediums will seek out a teacher. They may go to a wise man or woman of a traditional community, they may go to their local spiritualist church, or they may seek the wisdom of the ancients in books or on the internet. Some of these searches, particularly those undertaken with the aid of Google, may lead to a ghost hunter, or a ghost hunting team or organization.

## Family Lineages

Some family lines seem to have a propensity for supernatural sensitivity, producing mediums and those with other paranormal abilities on a fairly regular, although almost never predictable, basis. In such families, mediums are more likely to receive support or training from older relatives who are either mediums themselves or are aware of the family trait. The information taught to them may vary drastically from family to family, depending on their clan's religious views, how informed the family is about what truly lies beyond the Shroud, and previous encounters family members may have had with wraiths, Spectres, or other Shadowland denizens. Teachings are often solely by word of mouth (which makes the information-seeking medium's ability to hear, and thus learn from, their ancestors who have already died even more valuable). There may be an archive, kept from generation to generation in some kind of cryptic form. Family Bibles are a rich source of advice and information to anyone who can decipher the notes and comments scattered among the records of births, marriages, and deaths within the line.

Some of these families are known to certain ghost hunting groups, though nobody knows everything about all of them. Myths, legends, and gossip regarding these families abound and unless the hunter has a special connection, she will have to perform careful research if she wishes to track them down. Depending on the ghost hunters' own orientation, knowing a medium is part of a recognized medium-producing family or culture may serve as some kind of guarantee the medium will be both genu-

ine and trained. There is, however, no guarantee the medium will be sympathetic to the ghost hunters' aims, and some will actively oppose them. A ghost hunter would be well-advised to do their homework carefully before revealing too much information to a medium who might well turn into an enemy.

There is nothing to prevent a medium who comes from one of these families from becoming a ghost hunter herself. She may even gather around herself those with other talents to make her hunting more efficient. Rather than being frightened of her own powers, she may use them to prove to the world that ghosts exist.

## The Benandanti

### History

The Benandanti are not, strictly speaking, a family. Way back, over a millennium ago, they may have been, or that may just be a story made up to cover up the truth. The myth indicates that the Maldonati family discovered that, when a baby was born with a caul, it had the potential to communicate with the dead, along with other special abilities. These abilities did not develop spontaneously but required a long and arduous apprenticeship. The family were happy to teach the secrets of the caul to those unrelated to them in exchange for fortunes and favors, and thus they became rich and powerful. Their greed and maltreatment of apprentices backfired on them, however, when a group escaped their clutches and, along with Paulo, a fully initiated elder, went into hiding in the foothills of the Lombardian alps. They called themselves Benandanti ("Good Walkers"), and though not necessarily related, they were tied together by virtue of having been born with a caul. They entered into local folklore, not due to any talent for mediumship but because of their rumored battles with strega (witches) which occurred when their former masters, the Maldonati, came out to hunt them down.

The Benandanti are not just mediums and walkers in the Underworld. They are also healers, and many have competence with healing numina. In the time before Christianity came to dominate Europe, these powers, along with the Benandanti's assistance in determining the timing of agricultural tasks such as sowing and harvest (which they achieved through a combination of weather-wisdom and divination), found them a warm welcome in many of the communities they visited.

The Benandanti formed their own structure of apprenticeship and spread throughout Italy, teaching the uses of the caul, and acting as physicians and advisors to the peasant population. That is, until they drew the attention of the Inquisition, which regarded them as a pagan cult and persecuted them. Thus, the Benandanti acquired an undeserved reputation as orgiasts and devil-worshippers, crimes the Inquisition tended to attribute to any pagans they came across.

Those who survived went underground. No longer able to recruit from the local population or feel safe in their home-



## Eschatologies

Those who call themselves Damnation Theorists believe that all ghosts are evil, and do everything they can to destroy them. They believe this benefits both the ghosts themselves, and the living world which would otherwise suffer from contamination by the Restless. This theory arose in Catholic France at the time of the Avignon Papacy. Many Damnation Theorists adhere strictly to their Catholic faith.

The Benandanti known as Redeemers believe it is their duty to assist ghosts in "moving on" beyond the Underworld to the next stage of their afterlife. This theory has existed in some form or other for as long as any Benandante can remember, but, in its current form, it arose in the Americas in Victorian times alongside the growth in popularity of spiritualism. Some Redeemers are active in Spiritualist churches, but many lead purely secular existences. Bad experiences with ghosts reluctant to "move on" leads some Redeemers to become Damnation Theorists in later life.

The Isolationists hold the opinion that it is important to maintain separation between the living and the dead. This school of thought arose in Saxony during the Enlightenment. This opinion is popular amongst younger initiates whose education emphasized the importance of scientific method, but many older Benandanti of other schools move toward this position should they come to feel that there is little they can do to affect the conduct of those in power in the Underworld.

land, they spread out across the globe, many of them to the newly discovered lands to the West.

### In Modern Times

Although the Benandanti never were, strictly speaking, a family, a person can only enter their ranks if they are born with a caul and if they are Unhooded (an elaborate ritual conducted by a fully initiated Benandante). As such, a potential Benandanti baby is much more likely to learn the use of her caul if she has a living relative who is able to perform this service on her behalf. In the 21st century most babies are born in hospitals and birthing centers where the staff do not recognize the important mystical properties of cowl and will throw them out with the clinical waste. In view of dwindling numbers of newborns able to retain their cowl, there are Benandanti who have found work in hospitals and birthing centers and are actively on the lookout for potential recruits. Where possible, they will work casually as cleaners or porters rather than on a professional basis (though many are qualified to work in the professions). This makes it easier for them to rescue the caul from the waste, re-unite it with the potential Benandante and perform the ceremony of Unhooding. Professionals have to keep records and are responsible for their practice in a way that cleaners and porters are not. Once Unhooded, the fledgling remains the responsibility of the Sapiente, or "Wisdom," who Unhooded her until she reaches the age of 20. The last thing the Sapiente teaches is how to perform the Unhooding ceremony.

The ceremony itself is quite simple, though variations have crept in over the centuries as Sapientes add their own personal touches which their students will perpetuate. There are three essentials:

- A fully initiated Sapiente
- A person who was born with a caul
- The caul with which they were born

The Sapiente will take care to perform the ceremony in secret but, as most children are born in hospitals which are relatively public spaces, it has not been possible to maintain total secrecy. The Sapiente holds the child securely in the crook of his left arm while holding the child's caul and his own caul in his right hand. Bringing the caul together between his index finger and his thumb, he recites (in Lombardic) a verse, swearing that he will protect and guide the child, teach the child to roam the Deadlands and forge their fennel sword. Finally, he swears that he will teach the child to guide another, so that the tradition will persist long after both are in the Deadlands themselves. Following the ceremony, he places the child's caul in an elaborately decorated box bearing both his name and that of the fledgling Benandante. The Sapiente will keep the caul and the box until he releases the child from tutelage, usually at the age of 20, when it is handed over in a ceremony of release, unique to the student and the Sapiente. Until then, the student may only make use of their own caul under their Sapiente's supervision.

### Organization

Due to their scattered nature and the difficulties of recruitment, the Benandanti only organize themselves very loosely. Small groups (maybe 10, maybe twice that number, never more) gather during the Ember Weeks (that is, the weeks which follow the first Sunday of Lent, Whitsunday, Holy Cross Day on September 14th, and the Feast of St. Lucy on December 13th). They signal the place of their meeting by hanging a flag of gilded white ermine, symbolic of wisdom and purity.



Due to the isolation of individual Benandanti, they have few shared resources, and groups tend to act in isolation. Amongst initiates, commonly held opinions arose at various times, and these can arouse passionate debate between Sapiente and student, as well as between fully initiated Benandanti at their periodic meetings. Adherents of these schools of thought are even less organized than the Benandanti as a whole. Members of any one school may have nothing in common with each other apart from being Benandanti and thinking along similar lines. Students may follow a different school from that of their Sapiente. Many Benandanti change their way of thinking as they grow older and more experienced, and there is absolutely no problem with this. Only one in 80,000 births occurs with a caul and only a small proportion of these are ever Unhooded. The Benandanti are few enough without creating internal subdivisions.

Within these schools there is no agreement about the best methodology for achieving their aims. There are other, less persistent schools of thought that come and go over the years. All Benandante can enter the Underworld through Ekstasis, but this does not mean that they need to agree about the meaning of what they find there, or what their attitude toward beings and events across the Shroud should be.

## Modus Operandi

Wisdom passes knowledge to apprentice. Tradition forbids the making of records of any kind, and so the modus operandi of the Benandanti varies over time and space. The Benandanti have two things (apart from the caul) in common. First, all will learn everything they can about the afterlife in order to better bring

about the destruction or transcendence of wraiths (or whatever else their minor school of thought believes is the right thing to do with them). Secondly, they carry a fennel sword, and each Benandante must forge their own. This is accomplished only at great cost, as some stages take place in the Skinlands and some in the Underworld, with the final forging taking place within a Nihil. The sword comes to represent the Benandante's power over and integration with the Underworld.

## Special Powers

**Minor Ekstasis:** By placing their caul over their eyes and concentrating on seeing the Underworld, Benandanti can peer into the Shadowlands with a simple Willpower roll (difficulty 7). The range of vision is the same as their range of vision in the Skinlands. Many of the Benandanti are content with these glimpses but some go on to develop

**Ekstasis** (prerequisite Merit: Medium): Ekstasis is only possible during the hours of darkness and, even when the Benandante takes all possible precautions, is potentially extremely dangerous. The Benandante meditates, using their caul as a focus (Perception + Meditation, difficulty 8). Success will put the Benandante's spirit form in the Underworld, along with their fennel sword which acts as a Stygian steel blade.

Once in the Underworld, the Benandante must immediately take a moment to orient themselves (Wits + Alertness, difficulty 6) to the location of the entrance through which they crossed the Shroud, as they will need to return there before dawn in order to return to the Skinlands. While in the Underworld the Benandante has the same vulnerabilities as a wraith. Additionally, she must take great care of her caul. If she loses





it, or becomes separated from it, she must recover it or stay in the Underworld forever. If someone or something destroys her caul, it is impossible for her ever to return to the Skinlands.

The entry point to the Underworld created by meditation on the caul will last until the next dawn, at which point it disappears. It is therefore important that the Benandante gets back to that point in the Underworld in good time. If the entry point is still there and the Benandante took the trouble to orientate himself as they entered the Underworld, they can find it without significant problems (Wits +Alertness, difficulty 5). Once they find the entrance, the Benandante concentrates hard on the living lands while stretching the caul over their eyes, enabling them to escape the power of death (Perception + Meditation, difficulty 6).

Loss of the entry point or caul, or failure to successfully perform the return to the Skinlands, leaves the individual stuck in the Underworld. It is possible to find a lost caul or an alternative entry point. Benandanti have been known to make trips to the Underworld in order to find lost loved ones, or just to create a new entry point in the hope the lost one will find it. These quests, however, can take anywhere from a few nights to several decades. Some remain lost for all eternity, and those who cannot retrieve their caul will never return at all.

## The Hidalgo

### History

Subsequent to Columbus' voyage to the West Indies in 1492 many mortals, vampires and other creatures traveled to the Americas in order to enrich both their knowledge and their purses. The conquistadors considered the pre-Columbian civilizations theirs to conquer, pillage and convert to Catholicism. The clergy destroyed a vast number of the Maya's written records, leaving many with the impression they had been a warlike and destructive people, addicted to human sacrifice. Maya art and architecture (much of which remains intact) reveals that both war and human sacrifice were part of their culture, but many of the softer aspects of their society and the actual substance of their belief systems only become apparent with deeper study which few are prepared to undertake.

The Giovanni, a clan of vampires with a special interest in ghosts, were just establishing themselves in Venice and many of them joined the expeditions to the New World, hoping to increase both the family's fortunes and knowledge. They were amazed by what they found. There may not have been as many cities made of gold as rumor suggested, but gold there was and, even more enticing, massive profits to be made from the slave trade. The Giovanni plunged into that racket up to the elbows and beyond, and the family's coffers swelled.

More than that, though, at least to the scholarly, they found a civilization with a deep knowledge of death and the Underworld. This presented the nominally Catholic Giovan-

ni with a terrible dilemma. How could they benefit from the knowledge of the Maya people while supporting their conversion to Christianity and the destruction of their blasphemous texts? More importantly, how could they preserve the knowledge of conversation with the dead for themselves and avoid sharing it with mere mortals outside the family?

There was another complication for those of the Giovanni who had made a deep study of the Underworld. The native priests, shamans, and other talkers-with-the-dead knew of lands quite different from those of Stygia, the Underworld Kingdom with which they were familiar. These lands, occupied mainly by the ghosts of native Americans, would eventually become known as Dark Kingdom of Obsidian. This was not of much practical significance to the family, as wraiths seemed to operate in much the same way there, but it did bring about some difficulties when attempting to work with local mediums.

It was Tommaso Giovanni who came up with what was, at the time, considered a brilliant idea. Writing from Venice to his nephew Vespasiano, he suggested interbreeding Maya natives with family members and potential mediums amongst the Spanish in the hope of establishing a new branch of the clan. This was the origin of the Hidalgo branch of the Giovanni. Bringing native talents into a well-bred Spanish bloodline legitimized them to a certain extent, and hefty bribes ensured the baptism of the resulting infants. The very name of this Giovanni bloodline signifies minor Spanish nobility and, whenever the breeding program met with resistance from the local pagan rulers, it was easy enough to relocate the essential breeders into Spanish or Portuguese cities where they readily integrated.

For a while, Vespasiano's program enjoyed success. The Hidalgo proved to be proficient in trade, and their mixed blood was a positive advantage in obtaining locally bred slaves to sell to the Spanish. A rare few were born with the potential to contact wraiths, and these received instruction in the rudiments of necromancy. Interestingly, while ghouling these mediums allowed them to retain their ability, once they were Embraced it disappeared. For this reason, Hidalgo vampires were never numerous.

This became a crucial factor in their survival. The general belief is that this family met their end at the hands of the Sabbat. Indeed, a ravenous pack caught the family in the middle of a dinner party and slaughtered all the vampires among them (including Vespasiano himself). Vespasiano managed to dispatch a wraith to his uncle to inform him of the attack even as it was taking place. Reinforcements arrived too late to be of assistance and found evidence of a large-scale slaughter.

The surviving ghouls, who had been hiding in the kitchen, needed to act quickly. They kidnapped a recently turned Sabbat vampire and dragged her off to an underground temple hidden deep within the rainforest where she remains, immobile, with a stake through her heart. She has been there



ever since the night of the fateful attack. She drinks the blood of the Hidalgo mortals and the ghouls, who need vampire blood to survive, drink hers.

## **In Modern Times**

The Hidalgo remain underground. There were few among the Giovanni clan who were aware of their existence in the first place and those few now believe that every single one of the family died finally at that fateful dinner party. The ghouls who control the Hidalgo remain wary, believing (correctly) that Mexico remains under Sabbat control. Additionally, the vampire, Jaunita Pinto, is essential to their survival. They guard her jealously as she is their only source of life-sustaining vitae. Those ghouls are very old now and, without her, they would crumble swiftly. In order to keep their existence hidden the Hidalgo circulated rumors that their necromantic methods were vile and abominable. They believe that this slander, along with the rumor that they are all dead, helps to dissuade anyone from coming looking for them.

The Hidalgo have little interaction with the outside world. They live deep in the rainforest on the border between Chiapas and Guatemala. There is some trading and intermarriage with nearby groups, so their isolation is not total. From time to time illegal loggers have impinged upon their privacy but, to date, swiftly summoned wraiths have proven sufficient to persuade the loggers to leave their lands. The Hidalgo live out their own, eclectic traditions — a syncretic mix of Catholicism and modern Maya belief.

The belief among the other Giovanni families (or, at least, those who were ever aware of the Hidalgo's existence) is that the Sabbat wiped the Hidalgo out entirely. Some made the effort to trace survivors but they failed to find a single Kindred, ghoul, or mortal. Records of the search exist, filed away in the Giovanni vaults in Venice. There are records stating that some mortal Hidalgo family members went missing on the night of the massacre and the assumption is they fled to the rainforest but, to date, none of their descendants have come to light. Some amongst the Giovanni are continuing to search. They reason that the three ghouls and 20 to 30 mortals of whom records (but no remains) exist can't simply have disappeared.

Recently a new threat has arisen. GPS and LIDAR (light detection and ranging) technology are revealing more and more of the temples once hidden deep in the jungle. As such, the isolated Hidalgo risk discovery by archaeologists, tomb raiders, ghost hunters or Giovanni obsessed with finding traces of their "lost" bloodline.

There are, perhaps, three dozen of the Hidalgo left in the rainforest, about six of whom are mediums (it's hard to state a precise number as no one is yet sure how some of the younger babies will turn out). While the family hold their ancient leaders in the highest regard, the ghouls have been unable to secure absolute obedience. Some youngsters have fallen in love

with people from outside the family and have run off to be with them, taking their mediumship and legends with them. Others, learning of a more fulfilling, or at least less primitive, life outside the rainforest, have taken off through the jungle and ended up in nearby towns and villages, where they enjoy television, internet and all the wonders of the 21st century. No one is very sure how many have run away and no one has any idea how many new mediums they may have bred. They are still part of the bloodline, though no longer part of the family.

## **Organization**

Isidora Navarro, Eustacio Céspedes, and Ixbalanque rule the mortal family with an iron fist. Isidora and Ixbalanque are both mediums, while Eustacio sees to the family's security and material wealth. They rely entirely upon the mortal Hidalgo for interaction with the outside world. While the majority of the mortals revere their leaders as priests and mentors, their authoritarian attitude does not sit well with all of the younger generation and this is yet another reason why some of them leave the safety of the rainforest.

The runaway Hidalgo and their descendants have no formal organization. Some, who know of each other, keep in touch. Those runaways who are mediums still employ the methods taught to them by Isidora and Ixbalanque. Most have taught some version of this methodology to any offspring of their own who have shown signs of the talent.

## **Modus Operandi**

Isidora and Eustacio have not used wraiths to attempt to contact other Giovanni because they fear annihilation and feel they can only assure their safety by staying in hiding. They only know the simplest rudiments of the vampiric discipline of Necromancy, as their masters considered other paths too dangerous in the hands of an untested bloodline's servitors. The mortal mediums form connections with wraiths whom Isidora and Eustacio then bind into service. This is how the Hidalgo have managed to survive in such splendid isolation, by getting wraiths to do much of the work, including spying out good places to fish, pick berries and grow a few hasty crops, as well as guarding the territory.

Those of the family who left the rainforest for love or in search of a more modern existence have integrated into their local communities and changed their names. While few advertise their talents, many are known by their neighbors to possess special skills. At least one branch of the family are known as modern Maya priests and promote the revival of Maya traditions including pok ta pok, the updated version of the ancient Maya ballgame, in which one of their sons has gained a reputation as an athlete.

## **Special Powers**

Those of the Hidalgo with mediumistic talent are able to peer into the Underworld, though few can see past the Shad-



owlands. Some are more attuned to the area around Stygia, the region of the Underworld inhabited by ghosts from the Western civilizations, and some are more attuned to the area around the Dark Kingdom of Obsidian, where ghosts from Central and South America are in the majority. Functionally this makes little difference, as necromancy works with equal efficacy upon ghosts from either environment.

Typically, the mortal mediums will focus their abilities using modern Maya rituals involving candles of various colors lit at the cardinal points of an altar. They also use astronomical alignments and events on a regular basis. For the most part the scattered Hidalgo continue to use these same methods. Many Maya sites frequented by tourists have modern Maya altars with obvious signs of recent use.

The mediumship of a Hidalgo is strengthened when they are in contact with a sacred Ya'aché or Ceiba tree. To the Maya this tree is a central symbol of life and the planet on which they live. The roots penetrate the nine levels of Xibalba (the Underworld) and its branches reach to the heavens. The trunk connects life and the four cardinal points. Many of the Hidalgo attempt to contact the Underworld gods of Maya tradition. These may or may not equate in some way to the Deathlords of Stygia.

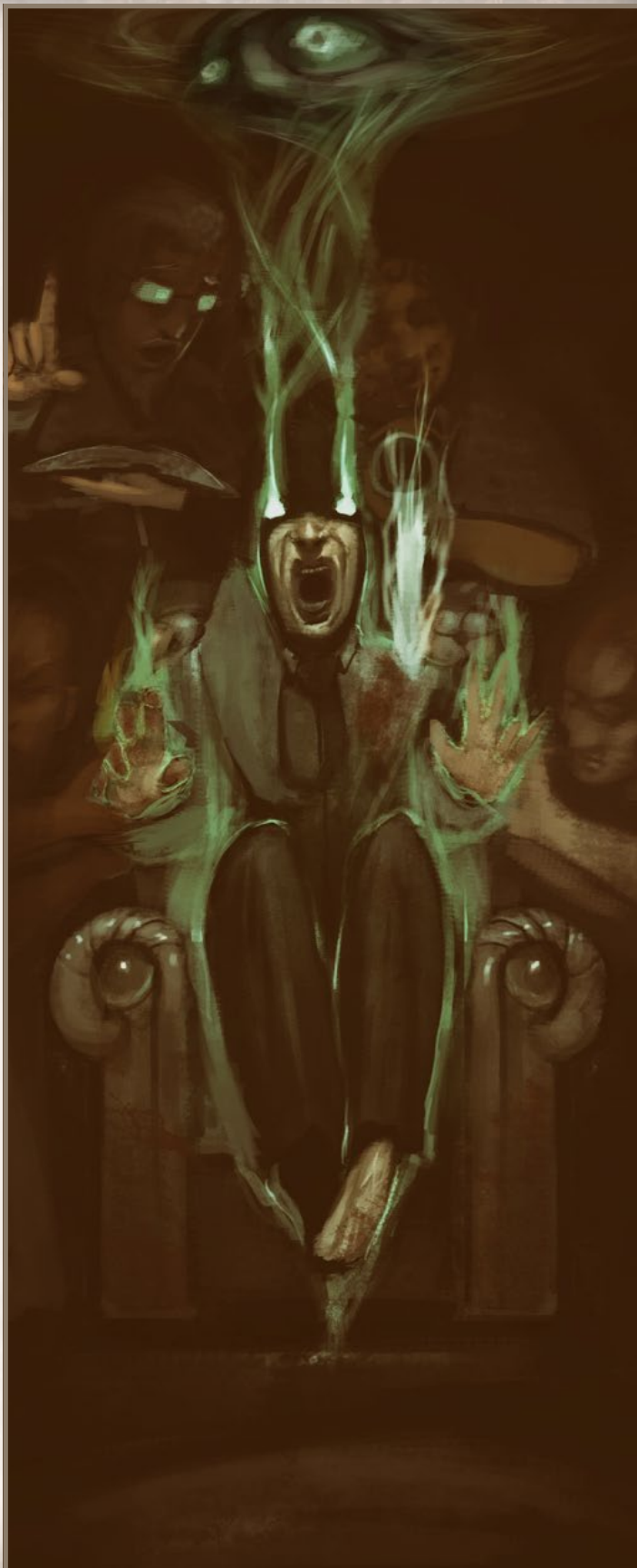
**System:** Roll the Hidalgo medium's Perception + Meditation (Difficulty 6) with a two-die bonus if she is in contact with a Ya'aché. Each success allows her to peer into the Underworld for two minutes. During this time, she can speak through the Shroud to any wraiths she can see, and they will hear her and be able to make themselves heard by her (and her alone) should they deign to answer her.

To affect the ghost, roll the medium's Charisma + Occult (Difficulty 5). On a success, the medium may make one simple request and the ghost will comply in return for a favor (usually communication with a loved one or protection of a Fetter).

## The Zukal

### History

The Zukal are a Bohemian family whose history stretches back to the Dark Ages. At that time, they were living somewhere in the Balkans. It's hard to tell precisely where, as villages and towns have changed hands and names so often in the intervening centuries. They wrote nothing down before the 16th century, as the family were peasants and, like most people, could not read or write. Even after the invention of the printing press and the tradition of inscribing one's family tree in the family's Bible, writ-





ten records of the Zukal are hard to come by. The family, with one or two exceptions, have avoided coming to the attention of important people. What is known to the Zukal and some of their close associates, friends, and neighbors, is that the family tends to produce children who grow up to be able to intercede with the dead.

Christianity did not come to the region until the 9th century and, even then, it took some time to convert the rural populace. So, right up to 1198 when Bohemia became part of the Holy Roman Empire, and even beyond that, the people would happily go to the Zukals, rather than a priest, if a ghost was making a nuisance of itself or if they wanted to contact their dead ancestors. As the Catholic Church slowly achieved domination of the area, the Zukals kept quiet about their talents, though some of their number joined the Church, producing a number of expert exorcists who gained themselves a considerable reputation locally. The Zukals have always been eclectic, so they were able to work as easily with the rituals and symbols of the Church as they had with the local pagan traditions before the Church came.

Pavel Zukal enjoyed a warm welcome at the court of Rudolf II in Prague where he engaged in lengthy discussions (and, it is rumored, a love affair) with Edward Kelley when he was visiting the Emperor with Dr. John Dee. Dee and Zukal did not get on very well, but Pavel learned enough from Kelley to get members of his family positions in a number of aristocratic and wealthy households where they earned their room and board by producing magical miracles and communicating with the dead.

The Renaissance in Europe was an exciting time for anyone with any kind of occult ability and, through Pavel's contacts, the family were able to spread out across Europe and, subsequently, into the New World. Many changed their names, the better to assimilate into their new homelands. Among themselves, though, they remember their past. And they still produce mediums on a regular (if unpredictable) basis.

For three centuries the dispersed Zukal kept their talents to themselves and those they had reason to trust. With the coming of the Victorian obsession with the occult and spiritualism, they moved into high society again. Magdaléna Whittington, for instance, managed to inveigle her way into Madame Blavatsky's inner circle in London, and Pushkaryov Korney Petrovich enjoyed some notoriety as first a supporter and then a detractor of Mary Baker Eddy. These years were very fruitful for the Zukal and they were able to build up financial resources. They never acquired a great mercantile empire which would only have drawn unwanted attention. However, a few well-paying customers for table rapping and, more importantly, access to capable financial advisors enabled the Zukal to change from a family who existed hand to mouth, relying on small donations from superstitious peasants as poor as they were themselves, to a family that are able to start their children off in life with the benefit of financially solvent parents.

Not every child born to this widespread family has the innate potential to become a medium. Most, in fact, do not. Family tradition has it that, at any one time, there will be 13 Zukal mediums in the Skinlands. When one dies (or, as in the case of Petra Zukalji who suffered serious head injury when bombs hit her home in Coventry during WWII, becomes permanently incapacitated) one of the next three children to be born will have the ability to communicate with the dead.

## In Modern Times

The Zukal family have dispersed widely throughout Europe and the United States of America, with lower numbers in Russia and Australia. Scattered individuals probably exist elsewhere. So, while they make every effort to keep in touch, this has not always been possible. However, when one of the known mediums dies and the next three babies born prove not to have the talent, the entire connected family goes into search mode. With modern technologies this, to date, has proven 100% effective. No Zukal medium has ever been without the support of their extended family.

The Zukal take great care of their youngsters with the talent, which they call *nadané*. The family at large support them financially (and this has always been the case, even at times when the entire line lived in poverty). The child, wherever they are born, will receive the best possible medical care and the family will encourage them to take advantage of an excellent mundane education. At the same time, the young medium will receive training in the use of *nadané*. Most of the elders of the family, even those without *nadané*, know a little hedge magic; enough to cast a ward to protect a child from a rampaging Spectre. The Zukal instruct the talented child in the unique and specific methods they use to deal with those beyond the Shroud and, given a natural ability to deal with the Restless Dead, they usually pick these up very quickly, becoming proficient by the time they hit adolescence.

## Organization

Because the family have scattered so widely (some half-jokingly refer to the "Zukal diaspora"), some form of organization is necessary. There is one branch of the family who have retained their original name and have been residing in Prague since the 16th century. They describe themselves as having the purest Zukal blood (and this may well be true, since they rarely marry anyone from outside the bloodline) and are known to the family as the *Strýci*. They keep the family records, including a number of antique and valuable family Bibles dating back to the Bohemian Protestant revolutions. They do not rely solely upon written records, however. The Zukal have always been early adopters of technological innovations and much of their genealogical data exists on multiple internet clouds. Family trees do not need to be secret, and the coding which shows which of the family carry the medium talent is known only to the *Strýci*.



The Zukal inform their Strýci whenever a medium dies and whenever a child is born. Not only do the Strýci keep the family records, but they also distribute resources. When a child who potentially bears the nadané is born, a Strýci will visit, bearing gifts for the naming ceremony. They will test the child for mediumship and assign him or her an appropriate mentor. It is not always possible to detect nadané in a newborn so, as it can only be one of three babies, sometimes a child without nadané receives training alongside one who is a medium. Better, the Strýci say, to train a child who is not a medium than to miss training one of the gifted.

As he grows up, there is a strong expectation that the new medium will use his nadané to enrich the family. The medium might ask dead tipsters which horses to back or which stocks to buy but, more frequently, will work as a medium professionally, favoring clients who are rich, well connected, and discrete. The family guard their mediums zealously and they rarely make an appearance without an entourage composed of hefty (and often well-armed) brothers, cousins, and uncles.

Every Zukal medium tithes 10% of income earned by means of their nadané to the Strýci who use it to ensure that every child receives proper education in the ways of the Zukal. Many non-medium family members who can afford to do so also contribute. The family trusts the Strýci to distribute these resources fairly.

## Modus Operandi

The Zukal will help those in their communities deal with any kind of possession or haunting. They will do this without requesting payment, though they will not refuse payment if someone offers it. They also take on work for the rich and famous, for which they demand a high price, though never more than the Strýci judge the client can afford.

If asked to contact a particular deceased person, the Zukal will ask for an item that was strongly associated with the required individual and, using that as a focus, will enter into what appears to be a trance state. Some of that is play-acting – in line with what the client expects – but what the Zukal is actually doing is entering a deep state analogous to alpha-wave meditation. Once in that state, the Zukal is able to summon a specific ghost. Much depends on the closeness of the connection between the deceased person and the object being used as the focus. Even more depends on whether or not the deceased is in an accessible part of the Underworld. Not every dead person becomes a ghost.

Every Zukal with the nadané can call upon the assistance of dead family members. Each of them has a connection to at least one dead Strýc and many also have connections to deceased members of their more immediate family. These wraiths can be counted upon to help out should a ghost being sought fail to appear.

Exorcism is difficult and exhausting and not an activity to undertake without good reason. When a Zukal attempts to exorcise, she will enter into a contest with the possessing entity which can go on for many hours. Sometimes the Zukal will try to persuade or trick the entity into leaving, sometimes she will try to force it. Other approaches are possible, but the possessing entity will usually resist. Furthermore, ghosts are not the only entities who might possess a person, a structure, or an area. Zukal have no special defenses against non-ghostly entities, and risk making a powerful enemy for themselves should they attempt an exorcism without first investigating what exactly is responsible for the possession. This is easy enough for a medium to do as they can see and communicate with ghosts who are in their presence, but a vampire, demon, or other type of possessing entity would not be any more visible to them than it would be to a family member without the gift.

## Special Powers

The nadané is particularly orientated toward contacting specific wraiths, and exorcism. Other mediums can attempt these tasks, but the nadané changes the methodology. It is important to remember that *only* Zukal mediums can use these particular means of summoning and exorcising ghosts. For other mediums, see the systems elsewhere in this book.

To contact a specific wraith, the Zukal uses an item with which that person had a strong connection in life (e.g. a wedding ring, a fountain pen used to write a novel) as a focus, and attempts to enter a trance-like state of meditation – roll Charisma + Meditation (Difficulty 6). The difficulty can be adjusted up or down depending on the actual connection between the “focus” and the Restless in question; an actual Fetter grants one automatic success. If the Zukal succeeds, the wraith hears the call and will appear to the Zukal as soon as it can. It is, of course, possible that the deceased in question is not a wraith, in which case the medium must admit failure or fake it. For fallback, all nadané Zukal have a relationship with a handful of family wraiths who will do their best to answer as the deceased would have answered, in so far as they have the ability to do so.

To exorcise an object, person, building or area, the Zukal must persuade or force the invading entities to leave. Make a contested roll of either her Manipulation + Persuasion or Manipulation + Intimidation versus the possessing Restless’ Stamina + Willpower. Exorcism is tough and may be attempted as an extended action. Of course, if the possessing entity is not a ghost, the action will automatically fail and the possessing entity may well harbor resentment over the medium’s attempt to dislodge it.







# Character Creation

"I'll say this: The scariest monster in the world is human beings and what we are capable of, especially when we get together."

– Jordan Peele, American actor and writer-director,  
*Business Insider* interview (Feb. 22, 2017)

When we die, we don't truly know what happens to us. For most people this uncertainty becomes a stone to build something upon, a strange foundation resting upon an ancient fear. For some people this foundation becomes the bedrock of faith, an opiate soothing the masses in the face of slowly rolling inevitability. To some it may allow a certain *joie de vivre*, diving into the vices and virtues of life to mask their impending doom. But then there are those who look. Those who search for the end. Whether they make it their life's work or just a casual hobby, these individuals stare into the gaping maw of the void. And these hunters of the obscured, those who reach out to pull back the veil, have a special place in the World of Darkness.

These mere mortals only have a piece of the greater puzzle that is the ever-deepening chasm of the lands of the dead. A night of indoctrination with a local death cult may have somehow summoned *something* and now they must know more. They may have seen a ghost, a moaning shade forever trapped in a decaying mansion on the rundown side of town, confused by what should most definitely not be. Or, they may have had a glimpse of the other side, an endless wasteland dotted with the shells of what life used to be, before being brought back by the wonders of modern medicine. Whatever the case, these hunters have a justified purpose to investigate

and connect to the other side.

Unpacking the term "paranormal investigator" in the World of Darkness takes a bit of nuance. These investigators try to search, simply, for the paranormal, any events or phenomena that are beyond the scope of normal scientific understanding. We as players and Storytellers know and understand that there are some seriously distressing denizens of the night that march through the shadows on their way to commit any number of unsavory acts. Mortal paranormal investigators have very little, if any, knowledge of these endless masses of the other side. They reach out into the night, some with finesse and some with rather blunt tools, to contact the realm just outside their world, to come face to face with the things that just do not make sense to them.

## Step One: Choose a Character Concept

Whether wandering through haunted houses or abandoned graveyards, your character concept gives a paranormal investigator impetus to go out and find these places of paranormal activity and try to document or witness it. The character concept stage is also where you are going to pick your character's motivation, Nature and Demeanor.



# Character Creation Guide

## Step One: Choose a Character Concept

Choose paranormal investigator concept, motivation, Nature, and Demeanor

## Step Two: Select Attributes

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (6/4/3). Your character automatically starts with one dot in each Attribute. Note that your Storyteller might opt for the more potent spread of 7/5/3 to allow investigators to be more adventurous.

**Rate Physical Traits:** Strength, Dexterity, Stamina.

**Rate Social Traits:** Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance.

**Rate Mental Traits:** Perception, Intelligence, Wits.

## Step Three: Select Abilities

Prioritize the three categories: Talents, Skills, Knowledges (13/9/5).

Choose Talents, Skills, and Knowledges. No Ability higher than 3 at this stage.

## Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Backgrounds (5), and rate Virtues (7). Your character automatically has one dot in each Virtue.

## Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Humanity (equal to Conscience + Self-Control) and Willpower (equal to Courage).

Spend freebie points (21). Optional: Choose Merits and Flaws (max. 7 points).

### NUMINA

- **Whistle:** You bring forth the power of the Tempest with driving rain and soothing spirits.
- **Shadow:** You bend light and shadow to strike fear into others or hide yourself.
- **Path of Divination:** You use your tools to glean insights into the future.
- **Black Hat:** You can hack the reality of the Shadowlands.
- **Starlight:** You bring courage to those around you and can never become lost in the Shadowlands.
- **Mortal Necromancy:** You directly manipulate the energies of death and the dead.

### FREEBIE POINTS

Trait	Cost
Attribute	5 per dot
Ability	2 per dot
Numina	7 per dot
Background	1 per dot
Virtue	2 per dot
Humanity	2 per dot
Willpower	1 per dot



A character's concept is the creative spark that ignites the story of your paranormal investigator. It is very rare for people to make their living from chasing the unknown, so what does your character do all day? What is their day, or night, job as it were? And if they do make their living from investigating the occult nuances of the world, how is that funded? Are they a part of the ghost TV show boom?

A person grows within the many communities of which they are a part. Does your investigator have a family? What is their relationship with them? Do they understand your paranormal investigator's obsession with the "other side"? Who are the people around your investigator that help flesh out their reality?

These are just some of the starting points that you can work from to build this person. Of course, there are a multitude of character concepts found in books and media, but if you cannot find one you'd like to base your character upon, make up one of your own. The darkened sky is the limit after all.

*Example: Meredith is interested in playing a healer of some sort. After some research into jobs that are close to death and the paranormal, she realizes that she would be excited to play a paramedic that drove an ambulance.*

*J.R. is fascinated with exploring the concept of innocence lost in the World of Darkness. He decides he wants to play a college student that has fallen into the world of the occult. This causes turmoil for his character, who is also going to school to become a pastor.*

*Matt enjoys exploring scientific concepts in play. They decide to make a professor who lost their wife to cancer. While this character is interested in writing some books which prove that ghosts exist for their day job, they are also desperate to make contact with the other side to find their dead wife.*

## Motivation

Searching the dark places of the World of Darkness for knowledge of what resides there takes some guts. The senses drive investigators' thirst for knowledge, so they may experience some of the more terrifying aspects of what goes on in shadowy hallways and broken-down churches, yet unflinchingly continue their quest to understand.

These folks actively meddle in the affairs of things that go bump in the night, but *why*? What drives your paranormal investigator to put themselves into the line of danger, or at least give themselves the heebie-jeebies wandering around abandoned buildings in search of ghosts or what have you?

Here are some questions to help figure out why your character does what they do:

- What did your investigator witness to draw her into the World of Darkness?
- What does your investigator intend to accomplish with their knowledge?

- What does your character use to explain their experiences? Is it faith or spirituality, or can the uncanny be explained away through science and reason? Maybe a mixture of both?
- What would stop your character from exploring? What would push them deeper into the darkness?

## Nature and Demeanor

A character's Nature and Demeanor are broad, sweeping traits that color the background and the foreground of their behavior. These are essential portions of the character, two sides of the same coin that work in unison to present the character as a well-rounded individual.

Nature is the core that resides in a character's deepest self, reflecting true desires and aspirations. Nature provides the lens through which an investigator understands the people around them, and defines how they feel about their own self and actions. A paranormal investigator often has a Nature that drives their need for understanding.

A Demeanor is a cover for the paranormal investigator. In a constant struggle to not "make this weird," an investigator uses their Demeanor to pass as just a normal, everyday mortal who doesn't have an interest in what goes bump in the night. It also plays a large role in how they go about searching through the darkness for its knowledge. Some may be the boots on the ground, digging through attics for ectoplasm or remnants of spiritual energy on their EMF readers. Those more direct, active investigators may want a more aggressive Demeanor. Others may be more on the academic or scientific side, questioning the world to glean jewels of understanding. Those characters may have a more contemplative demeanor, or one focused on delving into the bleeding edge of their expertise. There are, of course, also the more philosophical or metaphysical Demeanors that encapsulate a religious or spiritual perspective.

For a complete list of Archetypes, you can use any **World of Darkness** core book. And if you don't find one to your liking, feel free to work with your Storyteller to create one together.

## Step Two: Select Attributes

If the character concept is the cornerstone of your paranormal investigator, their Attributes make up the foundation. These are the latent abilities that your mortal paranormal investigator has developed, either through their work as an investigator in the past or just as the culmination of their everyday life. You can distribute the points allotted for Attributes depending upon how you want the character to interact with the world around them. A socialite character may put their primary points into Social Attributes, whereas a scientist or professor may make Mental Attributes primary.



All paranormal investigators are provided 6 points to put into their primary category of Attributes, 4 into their secondary category, and 3 into their tertiary category. How the player assigns these points will shape how their investigator uses their abilities. Of course, if a Storyteller wishes to modify their setting to accommodate more veteran investigators or, conversely, a group of teenagers out in the woods hunting ghosts, they should feel free to allot more or fewer points than prescribed here.

For a complete list and description of Attributes, please see the Character Creation section of any of the **20th Anniversary Edition World of Darkness** core books.

## Step Three: Select Abilities

Abilities are like the brick and mortar of the character that you are building. Much like Attributes, Abilities are staggered into categories but they do not begin with a free dot in them. Your primary set of Abilities has 13 points to spread around, your secondary receives 9, and your tertiary group of Abilities is allocated 5. Something to note as well, none of your Abilities can go past three dots at this stage, but you can totally raise them up later with your freebie points.

For a complete list and description of the standard Abilities, please see the Character Creation section of the **20th Anniversary Edition World of Darkness** rulebook of your choice.

## Step Four: Select Advantages

The roof of the proverbial house that is your character is the Advantages that they possess. They give your character the edge in an investigation or a deeper understanding of their world via advanced technology or secretive rituals. They define your character's standing and status in investigative circles and provide companionship in the dark of night. These benefits could make or break an investigator abroad in the World of Darkness, exploring all its depth and breadth.

Each category of Advantages (namely Backgrounds and Virtues) has its own independent allotment of points. It is possible to buy more Advantages with your freebie points after placement of your allotted amount.

## Backgrounds

Just as we are products of the communities and neighborhoods we grow and live in, all paranormal investigators have connections to the outside world. These connections are represented by the five points of Backgrounds your character is provided, and they should be representative of where and how your character lives and breathes. A technophile science- and reason-based character probably would not believe in the voices a character with the Antecessor Background would hear, but a Paranormal Tools Background would be a totally fine fit for them.

To find a fuller list of the Backgrounds available to your character, please see the Character Creation section in the **20th Anniversary Edition World of Darkness** core rulebook(s) that your game is primarily using. While some of these Backgrounds would not be recommended for a mortal paranormal investigator, there are many that reach over the divide.

## New Background: Paranormal Tools

At the core of being a paranormal investigator is a deep need for either proof and justification for belief in the supernatural, or the destruction of all the lies and misrepresentations giving false hope to humanity. To achieve either of these goals in a reliable and scientific way, there is a series of best practices and industry standards that need to be abided by for your work to gain any traction at all. Most of these revolve around an array of tools, from the technologically advanced to the incredibly mundane, that capture data which can later be sifted to find strands of truth or at least possible proof of the unknown.

With the advent of the internet and the ease and simplicity of online sales and distribution, most of these tools are no more than a click away. There are some more heavily modified or home-brewed applications that have been created, and those fall more on the higher end of the spectrum, being more technologically advanced or rare.

- **Starter Kit:** You have a starter kit of mundane ghost hunting tools. These include, but are not limited to, a voice recorder, a cell phone for video and photography, and your laptop that provides access to editing suites and analytic software to nitpick through data.

- **Old Tech:** Actual film photography and videography tools, electromagnetic frequency readers, digital thermometers and voice recorders that automatically transfer data to your home laptop, and flashlights that provide multiple wavelengths of light are now at your disposal. This level also provides electromagnetic-field generators that charge areas with energy that could help ghosts and spiritual entities manifest.

- **Offensive Tech:** You start working on higher level traps instead of just passively taking in information. This level introduces motion sensors and laser mapping of rooms to try to detect movement or temperature changes. You also have access to ultraviolet-light video recording devices and cameras. This level also provides electromagnetic pods that light up when their static charge is disturbed.

- **Communication Kit:** Believed to be capable of facilitating contact with spirits and the other side, devices such as spirit boxes rapidly scan radio frequencies and provide a medium for spirits to speak through. This level also includes stranger technologies such as instrumental trans-communication devices that generate video fields of static interference that entities can use to manifest themselves.





••••• **Esoteric Kit:** Incredibly rare and strange devices fall into this range, such as one-off devices that can capture a supernatural entity for a brief period. This level also provides tools that can allow spirits to have full conversations with the living via word processing software.

## New Background: Caretaker

Shelter is a basic human need. We tend to build grandiose structures that pierce the sky or sprawl across the countryside. It is our very nature to continue to create and build, even to our own detriment. Many of these facilities and tracts of land become all but abandoned and consumed by the march of time. But, due to social pressure, most of these places must still maintain at least the slightest semblance of upkeep and repair. This is where Caretakers come into play. While you don't necessarily own the property you tend, you have the proverbial "keys to the kingdom" or you know who does and how to get them.

With this Background, you are part of a shadowy network of servants, assistants, and groundskeepers tasked with the upkeep of the world's cemeteries, state-run facilities shuttered by lack of funds, abandoned family farms, and other assorted buildings and estates that may or may not be home to the spooky and surreal.

While using this Background your character is perceived as someone of little consequence: a waiter cleaning up at the end of the night, a janitor working the rounds in the unused hospital wing, a group of engineers walking down the hall to fix a power outage on the twelfth floor of a century-old hotel. Walking around with strange equipment and video cameras

is probably not a good idea while using this Background, and if you do cause too much of a ruckus the Storyteller is apt to have NPCs question the characters about who they *really* are.

• **Butler:** You are a local groundskeeper for a small estate or cluster of estates left to ruin out in the middle of nowhere. You know this land and the buildings on it like the back of your hand, including but not limited to all the familiar secrets. This position is mostly solitary but you may have connections to fellow house workers and servants around your neighborhood or town.

•• **Custodian:** You have connections to local public building workers and know how to get them to allow you access to the buildings where they work. These could be libraries, schools, or places of worship — large places that have congregations or communities built around them. This does not include financial institutions or private businesses. This level again focuses on the local scale, such as a small town or village.

••• **Groundskeeper:** You can basically get into anywhere within your local town, neighborhood or village. You know all the hands to grease and all the pockets to fill, or you just have the keys yourself. You have made yourself so indispensable to the community around you that they would never think you were up to anything strange like paranormal investigation, and even if they did suspect it, you are too wonderful, respectful, or caring to ever be accused of any foul play.

•••• **Steward:** You have access to state facilities such as hospitals, mental institutions, or databanks and archives. This level also grants you entrance to morgues and cemeteries within a statewide area.



•••• **Valet:** You are part of a multi-state, federal, or national building employees' union or institution, or you are close to (or bribing or blackmailing) someone who is. You have access to buildings that someone of your stature could rarely even consider entering: military facilities, skyscrapers, major corporations, major hubs of humanity.

## New Background: Antecessor

You have an ancestor who shadows you and tends to watch over you, especially when you wander into dangerous hauntings. Perhaps you had a loved one who passed on and is now playing guardian angel, or perhaps someone of your family line took an interest in you. Whatever the case, you often at the very least have forewarning if entering a dangerous spiritual situation, and perhaps more if the spirit is strong enough to interact with the world around them.

• **Our Eyes:** You receive flashes of insight or visions of harm that may come to your person if you enter a location of substantial danger. At this level, your spiritual guide can only provide such a warning once per game session.

•• **Our Lips:** Your ancestor can speak to you from the great beyond, but only you hear them and they can usually only speak in one-word sentences. They can also provide you visual clues in the form of floating orbs or other light anomalies. Your guide can only gather enough energy to interact with you once per game session. Your ancestor can also tap into your familial life force once per session to heal one wound level of lethal or bashing damage.

••• **Our Wisdom:** Your antecessor can speak one full sentence to you per scene or hour. They can also move objects weighing as much as five pounds up to one foot of distance once per game session. Your ancestor can also heal up to three levels of lethal or bashing damage from your character once per session.

•••• **Our Way:** You can have full conversations with your spiritual mentor when they are near you and feel they have enough energy to do so. They can see the other side with a clarity that you may not possess, and can tell you what is happening there. Your ancestor at this point is also so deeply connected to your familial bloodline that they can heal major injuries you have suffered; once per session they can heal up to three aggravated damage levels from your person.

••••• **Our Hands:** This spiritual family member is of significant power. They can have up to two levels of Numina and once per game can heal up to five levels of aggravated damage from your person. Doing so significantly weakens your ghostly benefactor however, permanently dropping your level in this Background down to four until it is rebought with experience points (20xp).

## Virtues

The path to knowledge is ripe with the potential for hubris or temptation. Through patience come all things, suppos-

edly. But in the quest to understand the coils of the universe, is it alright to crack some proverbial eggs? Do the ends justify the means? And what are the lines that one crosses for true comprehension? Just how deep does the rabbit hole go, and what will you sacrifice to race to the bottom.

Virtues are the framework for determining just how far someone will go for understanding. They represent the moral code to which an individual paranormal investigator adheres, and define how they feel about their actions on the path to proof. A paranormal investigator character has three Virtues: Conscience steers a character's sense of right and wrong, Self-Control is what they use to maintain their composure, and Courage provides the character's capacity to withstand fear, terror, and the haunting realization of the unknown.

Every paranormal investigator begins with a dot of Conscience, Self-Control, and Courage. They then have seven additional dots to distribute among the Virtues as they see fit. The distribution of these Virtues dictates how much Humanity and Willpower they begin with, so make your choices wisely.

## Conscience

Conscience is a Trait that allows characters to evaluate their conduct in relation to what is right and wrong. Your character's moral judgment with Conscience stems from their attitude and outlook. Conscience is what prevents an investigator from going too far when confronted with a situation in which the ends might seem to justify the means.

The interesting challenges of being a paranormal investigator lie in resolving issues of Conscience with what needs to be done to understand the scope of the World of Darkness. Is it acceptable to break the law in pursuit of proof of the afterlife? Do spirits or ghosts have emotions? Do they feel like we do? Does agitating them cause them distress or is their response just some sort of mechanical reaction? What defines consciousness? Could you operate on the living to try to better understand the soul? What is the right thing to do and is there any end to the shades of gray in this world?

Conscience factors into the difficulty of many rolls to avoid your character committing a transgression against their Humanity. Additionally, Conscience determines whether a character loses Humanity by committing acts that do not uphold their moral code. A character with a high Conscience rating feels remorse for transgressions, while a character with a lower Conscience may be more callous or ethically lax.

- Uncaring
- Normal
- Ethical
- Righteous
- Remorseful

*Example: Meredith's character is forced into a situation where she must steal some opioids to use as a trade to get into a haunted mental institution. As this is a victimless crime the Storyteller has her*



make a Conscience roll with a difficulty of three.

J.R.'s college student gets into a fight with a local antagonistic ghost hunter. He gets a few good hits in on the guy and probably broke his arm. He's never hurt a person like that before, so the Storyteller has him make a Conscience roll with a difficulty of seven.

Matt's character must illegally exhume a body to find out if the ghost they are hunting is fettered to a ring it was buried with. As this is against Matt's character's faith, they have a Conscience roll with a difficulty of five.

## Self-Control

Self-Control is a measure of your paranormal investigator's mental discipline and control. Investigators quickly learn that wandering onto property that doesn't belong to them in search of the ghostly is still considered trespassing, and breaking and entering isn't really looked upon by the legal system as a minor infraction, especially when the perpetrator claims they're trying to contact spirits. Along with that, there are a multitude of temptations within the World of Darkness both subtle and obscene, many of which aren't even supernatural. Paranormal investigators with a high Self-Control can deny their baser urges more readily than characters with low Self-Control, on the quest for knowledge or otherwise.

- Unstable
- Normal
- Temperate
- Hardened
- Total self-mastery

**Example:** Meredith's character couldn't get any of the opioids she was going to trade for access to the abandoned mental asylum. The lock on the front gate looks flimsy though and she's sure she could break through it with her ambulance. The Storyteller gives her a Self-Control roll with a difficulty of five to resist giving in to some vehicular breaking and entering.

While fighting, J.R.'s character sees a broken bottle next to him. While he wouldn't usually do this, his character is genuinely concerned for his life in this fight. The Storyteller has him make a Self-Control roll with a difficulty of three to not pick up the bottle and use it as a weapon.

Matt finally reaches the coffin and opens it. As they have never seen a body in this state of decomposition before, the Storyteller has them make a Self-Control roll with a difficulty of seven to not throw up.

## Courage

Courage is the measure of your paranormal investigator's ability to stand strong in the face of fear or adversity. This is an essential. It requires Courage to wander into a darkened, dilapidated mental institution supposedly filled with spirits of the criminally insane. Courage is bravery, mettle, and stoicism combined, which allows an investigator to face the crushing weight of the unknown without succumbing to the

horror of a situation. A character with high Courage meets their fears head-on, whereas a character of lesser Courage may flee.

- Timid
- Normal
- Bold
- Resolute
- Heroic

**Example:** Meredith's character has gotten into the mental asylum but she keeps hearing scraping noises coming from inside the wall. Thinking it's just rats, she keeps moving until she sees a hand with blackened nails slowly reach out from a large crack in the ceiling. The storyteller gives her a Courage roll with a difficulty of seven to stop herself from running out of there.

J.R.'s character sees that the cops have showed up at the cemetery he is fighting in. As he knows this place like the back of his hand he also knows how to get away. The Storyteller gives him a Courage roll with a difficulty of five to run into the dark cemetery without a flashlight.

After holding down their dinner, Matt reaches in and pulls the ring from the finger of the corpse. As Matt knows this ghost is rather malicious, the Storyteller gives them a Courage roll with a difficulty of three to pull off this bit of grave robbing.

## Step Five: Finishing Touches

It's time to put the moldy, moth eaten drapes on the haunted house of a character you've got there. Your dots are a fine representation of the traits of a living, breathing paranormal investigator with hopes, dreams, aspirations, fears, and even (hopefully) nightmares. It is time to come full circle and connect the character concept to the fine details of the person you wish to portray. Look at all the dots you've placed on your character sheet and ask some final questions of yourself. Why are they there? What do they say about your character? How will they come across in the story? What parts of the character don't you know yet? You are the author of their story and you need to flesh out the physical, psychological, and background minutiae that breathe life into your character.

As a player, you may now spend 21 freebie points to purchase additional dots in Traits. These points may be spent however you choose, but remember that the Storyteller is the final arbiter of what to allow in the chronicle.

Each dot has a variable freebie-point cost based on which type of Trait it is assigned to. Consult the character creation chart for freebie-point costs of Traits.

Remember that Numina purchased with freebie points should come from compatible paths that fit the character concept. Some paths may not be purchased together as they clash with each other. For more information, see the Numina section below.

Optionally, the Storyteller may allow players to take up to seven points of Flaws to gain more freebie points, or use



freebie points to purchase Merits. For more information on Merits and Flaws, visit any of the Merits and Flaws sections in the **World of Darkness** core books.

## Humanity

Humanity is the gauge of your investigator's spiritual evolution, the metric of your character's moral code that determines how they will react during difficult situations. This Trait reflects your character's compassion toward and understanding of other creatures. Some people, such as murderers, rapists, and simply cruel individuals, have an extremely low Humanity rating and thus have a difficult time connecting with their community and society. A few have spent time caring and sacrificing for others and thus have a high Humanity score. Most people fall somewhere in the middle of the curve and simply live their lives without any great introspection or challenge to their sense of self.

Paranormal investigators often walk through ethically gray areas in the larger pursuit of research. You might have to break into a building that you just know is crawling with supernatural activity. You might have to lie, steal, or hurt someone to find that one video with that *thing* on it. And local law enforcement isn't likely to believe stories about ghostly apparitions or moving shadows that can hurt people, which could lead to uncomfortable situations in which you might be forced to deceive or even injure the police for the greater good.

And what of the dead? Because when looked at from one perspective, the examination of ghosts is the examination of the soul. What would you do if you found someone trying to force someone into becoming a ghost? Because effectively it would be an act of murder. Would you hurt them? Kill them? Stop them in some other way? If you knew it were possible, would you kill someone to create a ghost? What if it was something the person wanted?

The threat and fear of the unknown wear upon the mortal being. Anxiety can build and hollow out an investigator. Paranoia can rampage through someone's life like a screaming poltergeist. After seeing what exists in the dark corners of the night, could you come back to everyday reality and just live a normal life? And what of the unending examination of the supernatural, the echoes of bearing witness to the darkness literally haunting your mind. You know there is more, there must be more, so what will you do to *know*?

Imagine an endless labyrinth in which the cost to go deeper is the erosion of the human soul. As your investigator loses Humanity, she might care less about collateral damage and even blame the victims for withholding knowledge from her. Investigators with a low Humanity find it difficult to relate to ordinary people and thus have trouble making it through common social situations, perhaps drawing unwanted attention to themselves and their activities. As their empathy dwindles, an investigator becomes consumed by the

vivisection of reality, destroying their relationships and ties to the community until all they know is the pilgrimage into the depths.

Paranormal investigators who wish to regain or retain their Humanity must strengthen those ties to other mortals. It can be as simple as taking an interest in the neighbors, reconnecting with family, or forming romantic relationships. Religious characters might take solace in their faith or seek spiritual guidance. Scientific characters may reach for the ledge of reason to save themselves from drowning in the darkened tide. Such ties are a perfect hook for future storylines, as you never know who might have a good ghost story to tell.

Your character's starting Humanity rating equals the sum of her Conscience + Self-Control Traits, yielding a score between 5 and 10. Players may also increase their Humanity with freebie points.

## Willpower

Ghost stories have been told since the dawn of time. Be it a reflection of our own understanding of death or something subconsciously apprehended, ghosts have walked with us as we have grown as a species. But that great unknown still opens its widening maw before us and we still cower at its greatness.

Paranormal investigators rise to meet this overwhelming enigma and the beings who inhabit it. The World of Darkness teems with monsters, unsavory criminals, and nightmares, and it requires remarkable will to confront such beasts when every instinct screams to run. Willpower measures your investigator's ability to confront such horrors, overcome fear, and battle against overwhelming odds. It is the capacity to stare straight into the eyes of death and laugh, along with all the power that brings.

Stories of possession by the dead are not just stories. Spirits most definitely can subsume the will of mortals, but those of great resolve can withstand this assault. Investigators with a strong Willpower rating have the best chance at resisting the whims of the dead. Rare investigators are even gifted with supernatural powers of their own, and such characters usually have a high Willpower rating to distinguish them.

Like Humanity, the Willpower Trait is measured on a 1-10 scale. At character creation, your character's Willpower is equal to his Courage Virtue (though you may increase this value with freebie points).

For a complete list of the ways that Willpower may be used, see "Spending Willpower" in your **20th Anniversary World of Darkness** core book.

## Merits and Flaws

Merits and Flaws can add a distinct dimension to your character. Merits are special advantages unique to the character, while Flaws are liabilities or disadvantages that create challenges to the character's activities.



For a core list and description of Merits and Flaws, see any of the **20th Anniversary Edition World of Darkness** core rulebooks.

The following new Merits and Flaws are particularly suited to hunter characters and stories. As always, Merits and Flaws are subject to Storyteller approval.

## **Merits**

### **Innocent (1-point Merit)**

You are always thought of in the most positive light, unless evidence exists to prove otherwise. If you do something wrong and the act is not easily attributed to you, it will most likely be blamed on someone else. This does not mean that you are “an innocent” — it just means everyone thinks you are.

### **Temperature-Sensitive (1-point Merit)**

You can easily sense the change in atmospheric temperature if it rapidly rises or falls. Your sensitivity can provide a special recognition of where a possible spirit is trying to manifest. This also can give you a really good idea of where the drafts are in a building, providing the ability to rule out false positives.

### **Alley Cat (2-point Merit)**

Your curiosity sometimes gets the best of you, but for the most part it has worked out to your benefit. Because you have explored so much of your local surroundings you know, once per session, where something can be found. This could mean knowing where you can get five cases of black candles (obviously, your local Santa Muerte shrine hidden in the back room of that one awesome taqueria) or perhaps that one necklace that makes men black out when they wear it (that dirty pawn shop owned by the guy with the one white eye). If you saw it, you just kind of remember where it was. Lower the difficulty of any Investigation or Awareness roll by 1.

### **Ashen (2-point Merit)**

You just *know* when there is a ghost by you. You can feel the ash of the Deadlands on your skin. You get this gritty, slick feeling on your body when a wraith is around you. Your hair stands on end and shivers travel up and down your body. It is rather unsettling and something you have probably kept to yourself as you don't want other people to think strangely of you.

### **Human Lie Detector (2-point Merit)**

You can tell when individuals are not being completely forward with the truth. This doesn't allow you to know what the truth is, just that you're being manipulated. All empathy rolls have a -2 difficulty.

### **Lucid Dreamer (2-point Merit)**

Whether through training or in-born skill, you are an incredibly vivid dreamer. With your dreaming mind, you can build connections that you would otherwise have missed or make leaps of logic that appear psychic to everyone else. This can involve insight about locations or people you have recently encountered or problems that are on your mind. Your dreamscape is so well-developed that, in rare cases, a spirit may attempt communication through your dreams, though it usually comes in the form of images that may be confusing and jumbled to you. This merit provides a -2 difficulty on all Investigation rolls for the following day after a full 8 hours' rest.

### **Bribes (3-point Merit)**

Everyone wants something, even if they don't know they want it. But you do. You can tell from a mile away what people want and how badly they want it. When trying to coerce someone into providing you what you want, you are given a -2 difficulty as your knowledge of what they need gives you leverage over them.

### **Cultural Aficionado (3-point Merit)**

You have a passion for understanding the history, folklore, and cultural practices of the world around you, which greatly helps you on the job. Whenever put in a situation where cultural norms are different from your own, you are socially nimble enough to do what is appropriate and not offend others. You have a -1 difficulty on all Social-based rolls when a situation like this arises.

### **Frequency (3-Point Merit)**

You can hear and see a much wider spectrum of vibrational frequencies than other human beings. Like a human EVP/EMF device, but more accurate and with better range. You can hear and sometimes see ghosts, or their spiritual wakes. This does not mean they can hear or interact with you, though if you spend a Willpower point you can talk to those across the Shroud for one scene or hour.

### **Magician's Understanding (3-point Merit)**

Someone in your past family line had the gift of Second Sight, and you have inherited the faintest touch of their ability. Although you have no conscious control over these psychic abilities, and thus cannot turn them on or off at will, you are often able to get a sense of a location and can tell whether a spirit is present or if you are being deceived by some sort of charlatan. It doesn't give your character the understanding of how someone is faking a phenomenon, just that it is fake.

### **Mechanical Aptitude (3-point Merit)**

People are complicated; machines, not so much. You have a natural predisposition to tinkering and modifying me-



chanical objects. Because of this you have a -1 difficulty on any Technology roll, and this Merit acts as if you have a free point in the Paranormal Tools Background.

### **Circles (4-point Merit)**

You've got a guy, or a lady, or something. You walked into the wrong place at the wrong time but for some reason, either your own social nuance or just dumb luck, they *liked* you, like *really* liked you. From time to time you can tap into these circles of "people" and ask them for the word on the streets. But be very careful, as sometimes knowledge comes at a price. This acts as a free point of the Allies Background and can effectively raise that Background above the 5-dot cap.

### **Pop Culture Queen (5-point Merit)**

Your encyclopedic understanding and consumption of horror movies, books, podcasts, and television shows provide you a mental reference library for every supernatural situation you encounter, often leading to insight that benefits you and the people around you. Whenever dealing with a situation outside the realm of understanding you can turn to your Storyteller once per scene for some cinematic reasoning. They do not have to give you the answer to your question or the magic "key" to fix the situation, but they can certainly give your character some advice to move forward in a way advantageous to themselves and their cohort.

### **Reichenbach (5-point Merit)**

You have phenomenal abilities when it comes to visualization and recreation of events in your mind. When in an investigative location, you can easily picture situations as they happened or likely will happen. If you fail a roll that involves interacting with such a location in some way, once per scene you can use this ability to retrace your steps in your mind and reroll. This merit does not apply to combat in any way.

### **Houses of the Holy (7-point Merit)**

You have a place where you go and think. It will always be safe, no matter what. You know that you can always show up to this place and the world will just make sense again. Be it by the word of a kindly old priest, a meal homemade by your local pagan priestess, or just a familiar lab in the science building at the university you teach at, this place provides sanctuary. For gameplay purposes, regain a point of temporary Willpower for every hour spent in this location, up to your permanent rating. Also, this Merit serves as a protection against enemies that may be threatening the character. No supernatural enemy may set foot inside their sanctuary, though this does not mean mortal agents of the enemy in question could not be directed to do so.





## Flaws

### Handler (1 to 5-point Flaw)

You have a “handler,” a person who tells you where to go, why you’re going, and who will follow you around or “surprise” you on investigations to make sure you are doing the job. This person (or in some cases denizen of the other side that you are investigating) may withhold knowledge from you, fail to drop that check in your bank account, lose evidence, or do any number of other annoying and possibly dangerous things to you and your team. You should collaborate with your Storyteller to come up with an interesting antagonist when taking this Flaw. Some possibilities include an inquisitive police officer, a ghoul network executive, a publishing agent looking for that draft of the book you owe them, or a local gossip trying to find out what those kids with flashlights are up to.

### Scaredy Cat (1-point Flaw)

You startle easily. Like, really easily. It’s almost impossible for you to sneak around, as the slightest creaking of a board or squeaking of a mouse will elicit an involuntary yelp, shriek or groan of terror. All stealth rolls have a +1 difficulty and your Courage cannot be greater than 2 until this Flaw is bought off.

### Paranoid (2-point Flaw)

You’ve spent years embedded in the conspiracist community exploring different theories and unexplained activity. You are suspicious of everything and everyone. You pick up on innocuous details, each one providing more evidence for the conspiracy against you. Add one to the difficulty of all Social interaction rolls.

### Tech Zealot (2-point Flaw)

You are so deeply invested in the evidence-collection abilities of your ghost-hunting gadgets that you will discount the proof of your own senses should your tech fail to pick up related readings. Conversely, if your tech is giving you false positives, you will believe its readings over any perception of your own or your team. When using technology to find paranormal activity you are at a +2 difficulty for all Alertness and Investigation rolls.

### Early Access (3-point Flaw)

A near-death experience has left you more susceptible to damage from spirits. You have a greater understanding of spiritual energy but this knowledge comes at the cost of your own physical shell. Whenever you are injured for the first time by any spirit or wraith, the damage doubles.

### Protested (3-point Flaw)

In the high-stakes world of academia, you work on the bleeding edge of science. You may have had to crack some

eggs and make some hard choices along the way as well to get where you are. But either because of these choices or because of some perceived flaw in your scientific reasoning, there are those that quite simply hate you and your work. These people show up to forums you speak at, conferences you attend, signings of your latest book, and try to make your life a living hell. When in a room with these protesters you suffer a +3 difficulty to all Academics and Expression rolls as you must try to talk over them or force them to see the unreason of their actions.

### Tag-Along (3-point Flaw)

You have someone who simply must go with you on your paranormal investigations — someone who just isn’t that good at it. Be it a kid brother, a producer for your show, or a groundskeeper, this person loves to ask questions at the wrong times, pick up (and possibly break) sensitive equipment, talk loudly and bump into things, and generally be a pain to you and your team. You are at a +1 difficulty for all Investigation, Stealth, and Awareness rolls. This flaw could be taken to represent another player character or a non-player character of the Storyteller’s design.

### Sacrosanct Belief (4-point Flaw)

You have a set of dogmas that you follow to the letter. Be this some esoteric philosophy, the bright line of reason, or the hard line of the church, these paths are your everything, and when you are confronted by something that blasphemes against them you become irate. When a situation arises for your character that is in direct conflict with their beliefs they are at a +3 difficulty for all rolls until the scene ends, as they try to reconcile their understanding of the universe with their senses.

### Torn Caul (4-point Flaw)

You’ve done something terrible in the past and that has made you more vulnerable to possession. A dark door within your very being has been opened, and certain spirits can walk through it. The spirits cannot actively cause you to harm yourself or others, but they can speak through you or cause you to act not of your own accord for one scene if you lose a contested Willpower roll.

### Catalyst (5-point Flaw)

Something about your presence tends to rile the spirits around you. Perhaps you have a latent psychic gift or your emotional intensity is just the fuel that hauntings need. Whatever the case, whenever you enter a haunted location, activity is sure to increase. This also drops the strength of the Shroud by two levels within a 20-foot radius around you. It costs a point of Willpower to suppress this spiritual amplification for a scene.



### **Cooler (5-point Flaw)**

Although you are intensely curious about the paranormal, something about your very being suppresses activity in your immediate area. Your very presence is like static to the spiritual world. Even in the most active of hauntings, the instant you enter a room, observable activity ceases. The haunting may be intensely active one room over, but wherever you are, spirits know to avoid you. It costs a point of Willpower to suppress this spiritual feedback for a scene.

### **Frozen (5-point Flaw)**

When confronted with a terror-inducing situation, you become paralyzed. You are always the last to act, as your brain temporarily shuts down as fear grips you completely. When initiative is generated for combat you must skip your first action unless you spend two Willpower points.

### **Caught (6-point Flaw)**

You broke the cardinal rule, never get caught. But not only did you get caught, it showed everyone in the paranormal investigative community who you really are. You got caught falsifying evidence, plagiarizing papers, forging a picture, faking an electronic voice phenomenon. Whatever it was that you did left you with a huge mark on your public persona; things are much harder for you. It's harder to gain access to certain archives. It's harder to get the proper permits into haunted sites because you're "that guy." People won't give you the time of day and most definitely won't fund your work without some definitive proof. You are at a +2 difficulty on all Social rolls in social situations involving your peers and +3 difficulty on any rolls using Intimidate, Empathy, or Leadership. Those with this Flaw also cannot take the Caretaker Background.

### **On the Lam (6-point Flaw)**

You have a rather "colorful" past when it comes to hunting the paranormal. You're not one for "permits" — or "laws" for that matter — and your rap sheet reflects that. You still have outstanding warrants for your arrest and if placed in a situation with law enforcement it will turn out to be a bad day for you. Hopefully you have a good bail officer.

### **Death Cult (7-point Flaw)**

You are a part of a death cult and have made a pact with them to, at some point, be the ritual focus for one of their sacrifices in exchange for the knowledge they have. Whether you willingly give yourself up or they come for you, these people are high in influence and resources and low on belief in the sanctity of life.

## **Medium-Specific Merits and Flaws**

Hunters in general who benefit from True Faith have access to a number of Numina that help them deal with the strange creatures with whom they come into contact. Some mediums, of course, do have True Faith but they are not necessarily true to a Religion of the Book. Priests, rabbis, and imams in the World of Darkness (with some notable exceptions) are all too likely to look upon mediumship as something pathological or evil rather than something worth cultivating. So, whilst many pagan religions do celebrate mediumship and a medium from such a background might well have True Faith, the symbolism and imagery may need adjustment to fit in with that of the character.

### **Social Merit**

#### **No Talent Hack (1-point Merit)**

You have no more medium talent than the next person. But you are exceptionally good at faking it. Your cold readings delight your clients and you get commissions to conduct seances in the best society. You could even, if you wished, take part in a reality TV ghost hunting show. You think you could hack that.

### **Social Flaws**

#### **Boardwalk Medium (1-point Flaw)**

You grew up in an environment where your friends and family neither recognized nor appreciated your mediumship. You never found a mentor or teacher, neither living nor dead. Due to this, your talent is completely untrained. Following repeated rejections throughout your childhood and adolescence, you are uneasy around others and find it difficult to trust them. Once someone has earned your trust, such is your fear of rejection that you become rather "clingy."

#### **Believed to be Fake (2-point Flaw)**

Although your talent for mediumship is 100% genuine, at some point in the past someone exposed you as a fake. The exposure could have been evidence falsified by a personal enemy or someone who wants to prove that all mediums are fakes. It could be that you were put on the spot in public and your talent (which is never 100% reliable) failed to provide the evidence the audience craved. Whatever the particulars, your "fakeness" gained wide circulation on TV, social media, or in the press. You find it hard now to find anyone to hire you, except for those who want a fake.



## Supernatural Merits

The following Merits are only available to those with the Medium Merit.

### Medium (3 or 5-point Merit)

A medium is a character who can see and hear ghosts. A medium can see the dead clearly — and sometimes struggles to tell them apart from the living.

A character with the three-dot version of this Merit is an unwilling medium. When she's under stress, she can see ghosts. Precisely what counts as stress is up to the Storyteller, but taking an action with a high difficulty, or having to spend a temporary Willpower point both count. She can see present ghosts for the remainder of the scene. The character might not realize that someone is a ghost, until they do something supernatural.

The five-dot version of this Merit offers more control. The medium is closer to the Underworld and can perceive ghosts as distinct entities from mortals without the need for a stressful context.

### Talented Summoner (1, 2 or 3-point Merit)

Summoning a ghost persuades or forces it to come to the practitioner. This does not mean it will do what the medium wants after it arrives. This Merit provides the medium with a die bonus equal to its rating to any roll to summon a specific ghost.

### Talented Warder (1, 2 or 3-point Merit)

Warding a place, object, or person means that ghosts cannot approach it. This Merit provides a bonus to the warding roll. A talented warder can add a die bonus equal to their rating in this Merit to their warding roll.

### Consort (1-point Merit)

A character with this Merit is not a true medium, but has been attuned to a specific wraith who frequently possesses her. The “medium” may well think of this entity as her “spirit guide.” If the wraith who rides her is congenial, or receptive to bribery, a Consort can be of as much assistance to a ghost hunter as can a true medium. In some ways she may prove more controllable, as her governing wraith regards her as an asset and will attempt to protect her from hostile entities.

## Numina

The Shadowlands are no place for a mortal human being. Their alien landscape is barely inhabitable for its own denizens, let alone the living. From violent Spectres to the murderous environment, mortal paranormal investigators

who travel into this wasteland take their lives into their own hands.

But exposure to these perils seems to enhance, evolve, or modify certain humans. The raging winds of the Tempest or the crushing, oppressive darkness that bleeds into a haunting on the mortal side can cause humans to adapt in peculiar ways. These forces provide the seekers of knowledge with strange abilities which they have only just begun trying to understand.

And then there are superstitions; when provided with constant stimuli that defy rational thought, the mortal mind tends to create coping mechanisms. Magic, after all, is just science that can't be quantified yet, right? Right? Some systems of belief, when followed to the letter, produce strange, mystical phenomena that can protect or otherwise benefit the practitioner.

## Acquiring and Quantifying Numina

Numina are introduced through roleplay or at character creation, usually though the mutual understanding of both player and Storyteller. In the world of paranormal investigation there are two main branches of Numina that characters can receive:

- Hedge Magic — based in folklore; often associated with the Antecessor, Occult Library, and/or Mentor Merits
- Psychic Phenomena — often correlated with a high Willpower; the result of mental training, or a natural gift

Hedge Magic (practiced by Hedge Magicians) is a traditional type of magic like that often described in folklore. It is formulaic, and it is invoked by those who command the talent through the performance of specific rituals.

Paranormal investigators often stumble upon these almost mechanical sets of powers. They come from piecing together unusual circumstances and patterns that investigators have witnessed. This cobbled-together rubric somehow provides a code with which it is possible to hack the Shadowlands or their inroads into the land of the Quick.

Psychic Phenomena (practiced by Psychics) are evolved psychic powers developed through training, and possibly mutations, of the human mind.

Exposure to the often extreme conditions in which investigators put themselves can bend or rearrange a mortal's genetic code, providing psychic traits and abilities. Along with this slow, tedious process, such powers can also be learned or developed in mortals via regimented stimuli or practice. Investigators of a more logical bent may thus attune themselves to psychic Numina.

Each class of Numina can be broken down into Numina Paths. A Numina Path represents a focused area of ability centered around a specific theme, such as Divination or Shadow.





Like many Traits, Numina Paths are scored with a rating of 1 to 5. Each rank purchased indicates a new level of mastery for the character. For example, a score of 1 would indicate a novice ranking, while a score of 5 would represent mastery of that Path. As a character increases their score in a Numina Path, they gain access to the powers listed next to the appropriate number of dots and, of course, retain access to the lesser abilities.

## Purchasing Numina

Players can purchase Numina with freebie points during character creation. They may later boost these abilities with experience points (current rating x7) or, with Storyteller approval, diversify their talents with ranks in new Numina Paths.

Rarely does a mortal possess more than a single type of Numina, either Hedge Magic or Psychic Phenomena. The limitations of the mortal condition seem to make it impossible to learn both. Numina powers are costly to learn, and some of them operate under very different and perhaps even opposing paradigms. Learning too much puts a strain on a character's understanding of the world and may damage the foundation of her sanity or physical well-being.

For example, crafty Hedge Magician Mia Gardener might possess Mortal Necromancy and Whistle, which are both Hedge Magic Paths. Meredith, her player, is interested in

expanding her character's powers, but the Storyteller decides that her options are limited by her character's story and circumstances. It wouldn't make much sense for a healing witch with necromantic powers to suddenly take on the cold resolution of, say, Shadow, a Psychic Path with scientific overtones. Of course, there are outlier possibilities in all stories but remember the mutual understanding of player, Storyteller, and fellow compatriots is key to keeping a tale copacetic.

## Numina and the Paranormal Investigator

Numina are alien to mortals. There is no way around the fact it's not an everyday occurrence to see people digging through the entrails of a deer to see into the future or carving blood-soaked runes into a door frame. But, truthfully, it is just something else for the local ghost hunter to investigate on their path to knowledge and understanding. While it is exceedingly rare for investigators to procure these abilities, it is not unheard of. There are stories passed around ghost-hunting circles about "that one time Jeff fell through the rotted-out floor in that mental institution, but saved his neck because he just *knew* he had to roll to his left at the last second. Lucky guy, huh?" Because of anecdotes like these, investigators mostly just cozy up to these folks and try to understand them — or better yet, try to learn their gifts for their own investigative toolkit. It's not like curiosity killed the cat or anything.



## Hedge Magic Numina

### Mortal Necromancy (• to •••••)

There are a multitude of reasons why the dead are supposed to stay dead. There are just about the same number of reasons why the living shouldn't stray into the world of the dead and its magic. But to those arrogant, foolish, or desperate enough, necromancy is in fact a Path of Hedge Magic that exists out there in the dark recesses of the world, albeit a dangerous one. There is a long history, in both the World of Darkness and the mundane facade that covers that world, of mortals denying the natural order of things and using this art to their benefit. But anything gained through the desolate magic of necromancy comes with a nefarious price.

Those who stumble upon this Path are often surprised at how simple yet depraved learning it is. All one must do is steal blood, bone, or flesh from the corpse of a family member, then preserve it. Obviously, using bone is the easiest of these methods, but certain traditions focus on the healing power of blood. Some traditions focused on the adoration of saints or holy people have specific ways of preserving or mummifying the flesh needed for this path. When the tool is finished, all one must do is say a particular incantation in a dead language. Then the real fun starts.

There isn't enough drink or drugs in the world to numb the overwhelming anguish one feels when they are awakened to this Path of magic. The Pallio Dolorum, a binding force that imbues the user with the arcane knowledge of necrotic magic, is crushing, connecting a mortal to the grief of all their ancestors before them. For many weaker humans, this manifests in eventual suicide or violent madness. To be able to focus the mind while in direct contact with the pure energy of death takes incredible willpower and grace. One must wear and brandish their negative emotions like armor and weapons without becoming completely consumed by their fury. Whenever a mortal necromancer fails their roll to activate one of these Numina, they take on a derangement for one hour. If a necromancer fails an activation roll while their temporary Willpower is less than 3, the derangement lasts for one week of in-game time.

When using this Path, the practitioner must physically engrave or write staves of necromantic power onto the surface of whatever object they are trying to imbue.

#### Systems

**Roll:** Stamina + Occult (difficulty 7, 6 if written in human blood).

**Modifiers:** The character must be in possession of their magical tool, otherwise they cannot perform this path of hedge magic.

**Cost:** One level of bashing damage per level of the power unless otherwise stated.

**Duration:** One scene or hour.

• **Fear Stave:** When written on an object and thrown at the feet of a ghost, the ghost will cower in fear as it recognizes the void inside of you. You have a -2 difficulty for any Intimidation or Subterfuge rolls against the ghost in question.

•• **Prayer Stave:** When written on the magician's body, the caster can see, hear, and speak to any ghost in their vicinity.

••• **Corpus Stave:** You make a ghost within your sight take on a physical, corporeal form. It will have all the abilities it would have as a living, breathing human.

This also means that you can indeed kill the ghost. Doing so will immediately create a violent, raging Spectre obsessed with the destruction of your character, and give any characters the Spectre holds responsible the Haunted Flaw.

•••• **Crossroads Stave:** After carving, spray painting, or otherwise inscribing the stave into the ground and succeeding on a contested Willpower roll, you can summon any ghost whose true name you possess. This does not mean that the ghost will be happy with their sudden passage. It also bears saying that not every dead person is a ghost, either.

••••• **Knitting Stave:** A true dark art, this stave when carved into the flesh of another living being heals the caster of five levels of damage. It does not cost the caster anything. The other living creature, besides taking one level of lethal damage from having the stave flayed into them, immediately takes upon themselves the five most recent levels of damage currently suffered by the caster. This brutal act gives the caster a black wake in their aura for a month after using this ritual.

### Whistle (• to •••••)

The Whistle Numina are older Numina that have their roots in folklore and hedge magic, tricks that supposedly originated with kitchen witches residing in the birch forests of Russia, or with Jewish midwives according to other accounts. These wise folks would "whistle up" a storm, mostly to just water their gardens or give cleansing energy to the world around them.

These Numina do create actual precipitation, but they also have another effect. The powers release Tempest energy into the mortal plane, creating a calming effect upon the Restless Dead and causing them to "sleep" or freeze in place for the duration of the storm.

The ability to Whistle also has some strange effects on the person that possesses this power. All Whistlers constantly hear music in their heads and love to hum along or sing to themselves. Because of this they can never have an Alertness score above 3 dots. There are stories of other people or creatures that supposedly have had this "blessing" of music placed upon them, but no record has ever been found to prove it.

To actively use these Numina one must be able to whistle. They cannot be used in a place where your character cannot whistle. This includes under water and any situation in which



your character cannot push air out of their lungs. Also, this ability is draining for the caster; they must spend a number of Willpower points equal to the level of the power being used. So, a level 3 storm would cost 3 Willpower.

### System

**Roll:** Wits + Performance (difficulty 7).

**Modifiers:** N/A

**Cost:** 1 Willpower per level.

**Duration:** One scene or hour.

• **Concentration:** A stiff breeze will bring in fog or mist that causes all ghosts to become docile within a 20-foot radius around the caster. These ghosts will still defend themselves if any offensive action is taken against them, but they will not actively attack the user of the Numina or any other living being within that area as they are suppressed by the spiritual barometric pressure.

•• **Consolidation:** The storm grows to a steady rain. Ghosts continue to be frozen in place but now can be physically moved by mortal hands. This cannot be used in any way to hurt the spirits, but one may guide the ghosts out and away from a location, as though pushing curtains.

••• **Conspectus:** The storm becomes a thunderstorm. This expands the area of effect around the caster to a 40-foot radius, and the storm can “cleanse” ghosts that are violent. This storm suppresses the negative “Shadow” of a ghost, causing it to immediately stop any combat with the caster and helping bring it back to reason. The ghost may still be angry, but will not lash out till the end of the scene or one hour.

•••• **Compression:** The storm becomes a gale with hail and high winds. This storm is devastating to the Restless Dead. Any ghost that is of purely malicious intent and completely consumed by their Shadow will be erased by the hail that rains down upon them. Casters do not know what happens to these Spectres, but according to legend they will not be able to return to the location upon which this storm is invoked for a year and a day.

••••• **Compendium:** A storm of monumental proportions, this power causes the purge of all residual Shadowlands energy within 100 feet of the caster. All Restless Dead must leave that space or be ripped apart by the spiritual winds. Lighter shades will just be blown outside the 100-foot radius by this power, but heavier ones will be annihilated. This storm is violent and can cause collateral damage in the real world.

### Black Hat (• to •••••)

With the crushing flood of technology permeating almost every inch of our way of life, it was only a matter of time until younger ghost hunters found a way to blend magic and machine. Noticing the effects of ghostly energy upon technology, some bright Hedge Magicians hypothesized that the current could flow back into the spirit world. By using mobile technology and wireless internet, paranormal investigators

have found multiple ways to interact with the ghostly realm with but a click.

These Hedge Magicians use their own bodies’ electrical impulses as a sort of server that connects into the very fabric of reality. When using this ability the magician cannot be so much as touched without creating dire consequences. It takes incredible concentration and focus for the magician to both code and be a directional conduit for the magic at hand. If a magician’s concentration is ever broken by the physical touch of another living being while this magic is being used, they take one level of aggravated damage as their entire nervous system overloads and shuts down. This can be life-threatening to a mortal, and only immediate medical attention, such as an AED, or some magical healing ability can bring the caster back from the brink.

To use this path a character must have some sort of information-technology tool, such as a phone, tablet, or computer.

### System

**Roll:** Manipulation + Computer (difficulty 5, unless otherwise noted).

**Modifiers:** N/A

**Cost:** 1 Willpower per hack.

**Duration:** One scene or hour.

• **DDoS:** By perpetrating a denial of service attack, the hacker overloads a haunting. They cause all magical effects and ghostly apparitions to cease by overloading the space with their own chemical signatures, electronic nerve pulses, and general life energy.

•• **Dox:** The hacker can now dox the ghost in question, learning how it died, why it stayed around, and its true name.

••• **Firewall:** The hacker can now generate and maintain a firewall, effectively blocking all haunting activity within a space and locking off physical reality from all ghostly interference.

•••• **Phish:** The hacker can now defend a location against any ghost that tries to attack it by generating a phishing space within the Shadowlands. This fake hauntable realm will trick spirits into thinking that they are still haunting a space in the Skinlands, while instead trapped away from the humans they may have been harming.

••••• **Zero Day:** The hacker can now create a zero, hacking into the very dust of the Shadowlands. This Hedge Magic creates a malicious code that inverts a reflection of the Shadowlands into our reality, nullifying its energy. Any ghost trapped within the 150-foot radius of effect when this code is activated is immediately “deleted” — that doesn’t necessarily mean the ghost completely disappears, but no hacker has ever seen a ghost come back from this eradication. After an hour, the realities separate, leaving no trace of their conjunction in either realm. This code is a Manipulation + Computer roll with a difficulty of 7 to activate.



## Psychic Numina

### Starlight (• to •••••)

A modern Numen that was recently discovered by city-dwelling paranormal investigators, Starlight was aptly named after the stars one sees in the Shadowland skies when using this power. Like the ship-faring folk of times past, investigators can use this Numen to not only enter the Shadowlands but also avoid ever getting lost there. This power creates a protective shield for any mortals who enter the Shadowlands with the Psychic, up to a number of companions equaling their Willpower, allowing them to breathe the air and walk on the cursed ground. This does not mean they cannot get hurt while in the Shadowlands. This power makes those whom it affects a part of the Shadowlands, so they can be hurt there, and Shadowland objects and places feel real to these characters.

Supposedly, when asked, wraiths say they cannot see these same stars that shine brightly for those who possess this power. Some say it was created by some sort of pact with an ancient, fearsome leader of the Shadowlands. Others say it was made by the love of two mortals that burned so brightly that when they died by each other's side, it shattered into a million pieces, soaring into the sky as a physical memorial of their love.

Those with the Starlight numina have a bit of a cursed existence though. They struggle with anxiety that stems from their ability. The crushing weight of the night sky weighs heavy on their spirit. They also, in some sort of cruel irony, are wracked with the 2-point Flaw Phobia (of the player's choosing) and may never buy their Courage past the second dot.

Remember, this power only stays active for one hour within the Shadowlands. If the time lapses, there could be dire consequences for your character and their teammates.

#### System

**Roll:** Perception + Occult (difficulty 7).

**Modifiers:** N/A

**Cost:** 1 Willpower per level of the power activated.

**Duration:** One hour.

• **Key:** You can enter the Shadowlands through any doorway of your choice. This doorway will remain open only to the person who creates the threshold. It can be closed and reopened once without collapsing. You can intentionally collapse the threshold however, and use another doorway in the Shadowlands to reenter the Skinlands, but this costs another point of Willpower and you will have no way of knowing where the door will open to.

• **Sky:** For the remainder of the hour, your character is filled with courage and the drive to finish their goal. Your character has an effective Courage of 5 within the Shadowlands while this power is active.

••• **Constellation:** By tracing the stars, you get a general idea of where to go to get what you need. This could be in the form of a one-sentence clue or riddle given to you by your Storyteller. You must be able to see to use this power.

•••• **Fury:** You can share the drive you feel to complete your goal with your teammates by giving them a brief pep talk. Your character must be able to speak when using this power. You can give everyone on your team an effective Courage of 5 for the remainder of the hour.

••••• **Compass:** No matter how deep you go or how turned around you get in the Shadowlands you cannot become lost, and you know exactly how to get back to your doorway.

### Shadow (• to •••••)

The art of deceit can be an asset to the ghost hunter. Building on the idea that shadows conceal the truth, paranormal investigators who have become one with the darkness through which they frequently travel can obscure themselves and others from those looking to give the investigators grief. By accepting the darkness as nothing more than an absence of light, Psychic ghost hunters can project or bend shadows.

While the superstitious may perceive this ability as an "unholy art," ghost hunters that possess these Numina know that it is simply a way to physically project the simple science of bending and reflecting light and sound. As the Psychic uses their body to manifest these abilities, shadows obey, and the room grows darker. Sounds blur into muddles, like whispering currents of half-hidden noises.

If the Psychic prefers to distract rather than to conceal, they may send this muddle to settle over their target's head; if they elect to hide, those impressions smear all observation. This blurring extends to machines; digital filming freezes or breaks, audio recorders crackle and hiss, analog recording tools disintegrate entirely. The shadows swallow all. In game terms, you simply make a Manipulation + Stealth roll. The effect lasts roughly two turns (or two minutes) per success and travels with the subject of the power. You may use these Numina upon any appropriate party, or upon yourself (see below). To peer through these preternatural shadows, an observer must make a successful Perception + Occult roll with the difficulty equal to the Psychic's present temporary Willpower, or must possess some mystical perception.

#### System

**Roll:** Manipulation + Stealth (difficulty 7, -1 difficulty if the character is in possession of some sort of prism or reflective device).

**Modifiers:** N/A

**Cost:** 1 Willpower per level.

**Duration:** Two minutes per success.

• **Cultivate Shadow:** By shifting sounds or shadows nearby, you can distract another person — they see things "out of the corner of their eye" or hear "faint murmurings in the distance." By using this power on yourself, you may "blur your



edges,” making it harder to recognize you for who you are (-1 difficulty to any Intimidation or Stealth rolls). This level affects one person or human-sized object.

•• **Bend Shadow:** By “bending” the local shadows or sound waves, you may disguise yourself to some degree, baffle your words or cause the surrounding darkness to rise. Things get eerie when this psychic ability begins to manifest, as lights fade, shadows deepen, and sounds become watery and indistinct. Intimidation and Stealth rolls are at -2 difficulty.

••• **Build Shadow:** As above, but more unsettling; darkness seems to rise, colors seem to fade and sounds become mere bleats and thumps. A victim may need to make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to avoid minor panic. If you’ve used this Numen to conceal something, any observer suffers +3 difficulty on their contested roll to perceive it.

•••• **Sculpt Shadow:** The shadows may swallow two or three people or one large object. Sounds become completely indistinct and local cameras and recorders malfunction. Unless a victim succeeds on a Willpower roll (difficulty 8), they break into a panic attack and will immediately leave the scene if allowed to. If not allowed to leave, the individual will become increasingly violent in attempting to leave the darkness. Engulfed in shadow, you have a -4 difficulty to all Intimidation and Stealth rolls under appropriate conditions; the swelling black cloud around you makes you stand out unless the area was dark to begin with.

••••• **Perfect Shadow:** Everything within 50 feet or so goes black and stays that way until the effect ends. This does not work in direct sunlight. Any persons or objects within the cloud of darkness become totally invisible unless some form of mystical sight penetrates the gloom. Mundane recording technology simply fails until the effect ends.

## The Path of Divination

Throughout history there have been stories of wise women and men who can channel the dead to glimpse snippets of the future. Seen as a blasphemous art by many cultures, this Path of Divination is used to glean insights into the future. Such methods are not always easy or quick, but they can be effective if the Psychic interprets the signs correctly. The Psychic concentrates upon a single vexing decision or subject, and then uses an external focus to commune with the dead or perceive their signals.

By scrying the infinite expanse of death, Psychics can piece together what could be. The player makes an activation roll of Perception + Occult (difficulty 7) to determine what the character discerns. Each success gained on the activation roll increases the level of clarity of the answer provided. A single success will result in a vague impression or muddle of possibilities, while five successes indicate with some certainty which option will yield the best result. A botch, however, will result in faulty information that may lead to danger or worse.

A Psychic employing Divination may attempt to read another individual’s future, but she must do so in the presence

of that individual. Difficulties on rolls to perform this sort of Divination increase by 1.

## TOOLS OF DIVINATION

Divination has a long and varied past. The number of tools used to divine are just as numerous as the styles of divination itself. From throwing fava beans on a rabbit skin, to crystal balls or darts, these tools are just that: tools. Those who commune with the dead to scry the future are as many as the tools they use; it is up to the diviner what they use to channel. But there always must be a tool. A seer without their deck of Tarot or their cup of tea leaves is like a fish out of water when it comes to scrying. The form of divination often says something about the psychic that uses the tool. There is a large difference between someone who scrys the intestines of the recently deceased, and someone who throws runes.

### System

**Roll:** Perception + Occult (difficulty 7).

**Modifiers:** +1 difficulty to perform a Divination for others.

**Cost:** Varies

**Duration:** A single revelation.

• **Coins:** The Psychic interprets signs or warnings about the state of her immediate circumstances; the player can ask a simple yes or no question of the Storyteller and get an answer about the subject in question.

•• **Cups:** The Psychic eliminates possible negative outcomes by comparing them beforehand. The player may ask the Storyteller, who represents the Psychic’s guiding metaphysical entity, for information to help determine their character’s best choice for a simple decision. The player asks a question such as “where is the oak chest?” The Storyteller then provides some amount of information in response which will help the player decide.

The Storyteller should consider several factors when answering such a question. What is the intent of the Psychic asking the question? Are they asking which decision is safest? Are they looking for the quickest route to their goal? Which decision will have the greatest impact upon the current state of the chronicle?

Fate is not always kind to those who attempt to divine it. It might be that it is the character’s destiny to find the oak chest in the haunted mansion where they will be attacked by a vicious spirit, but that may be the path to determining the location of the haunting where it resides.

••• **Wands:** The Psychic may sense patterns of chance allowing them to glean short-term information that follows from specific decisions. A successful divination reveals information about a question as with the previous level of this power, but it also provides insight into the next set of decisions the character will face as a result of the choice they make. This degree of divination yields hints about the future, but it also reveals one or more of the choices and consequences the character could face.



To return to the example question (*where is the oak chest?*), the player learns vital information via this power. The player would know that, if their Psychic travels to find the chest, they face physical danger from the angry spirit protecting the mansion. If they overcome the danger, a new path awaits them. If they refuse to search for the chest, that same danger will visit itself upon another. In this situation, the player has many options and some amount of information on each, but the information is imperfect. The player relies more on impressions than hard-and-fast truths – which is the nature of divination.

••• **Swords:** The Psychic can divine specific events in the future. These events are still not definite, but they are much more likely than the nebulous possibilities above. If the target of the divination changes their current behavior, these events become less likely. The details are still vague: “You will find what you search for,” rather than “You will find what you search for cloaked in oak in the bottom of the home of the Shepherd clan.”

•••• **Kings and Queens:** The Psychic gains the ability to sense clear and concrete details about the future, and the ability to predict specific events with dependable certainty. They can now describe the chest from the previous example in exact detail. In addition, they may know of any dangers or traps present, and other intimate details about this location.

This level of the Path of Divination requires the expenditure of a Willpower point followed by a successful activation roll of Perception + Occult (difficulty 8). The Storyteller may lower the difficulty by 1 to 3 if the Psychic has intimate knowledge of the subject, a prized possession of the target, or some of the target’s physical substance, such as a lock of hair or some blood.

The Psychic may also communicate a subtle sense of the overall feel of their divination to a person whom it concerns by spending an additional point of Willpower. This might take the form of a sense of foreboding if things are dangerous, or a sense of peacefulness if things are going well. The recipient of this sensation will not recognize it as any sort of communication, but rather experience it as something internal like a “gut feeling,” as it were.

## Paranormal Investigator Groups

Human beings are instinctively social creatures that naturally gather together. Be it outside on a blustery night for a cigarette, on the subway after dark, or at a local resale bookstore, someone eventually will crack a joke, make an amusing quip, ask a question, or just reach out for reassurance. The same goes for paranormal investigators. This may happen in a multitude of ways, but there are some that are more common than others.

Players can pick one of these groups at character creation, and they may also change groups or pick one later as the storyline they are working through builds.

A healthy vein of competition also runs through many of these groups. Always trying to get the next great photo or the next bit of “proof” is a common motivation within the paranormal community. You never know when you could get your “big break” and get picked up by a local cable station for a ghost hunter show or receive an academic grant from a university to study the local folklore history of that one haunted mansion. Because of this there is a sliding scale from playful banter to outright hostility when working with other groups within the investigative community. There are, of course, some natural differences between some of these groups as well, with conflicting ideas about the paranormal and what the big picture is. At the end of the day it is up to the Storyteller and the players to choose how best to introduce these groups into their world.

## Occult Organizations

This may be a local coven or group of magicians or witches that have an interest in the other side of the veil. Do they have any powers of note? Possibly. They also may just be mundane witches that enjoy hanging out in graveyards. These folks usually practice some sort of religious observance having to do with ancestors or past lives. Whether built upon words of power passed down by family members or books of shadow derived from the knowledge of a high priestess, these groups are incredibly apt to reach out and grab knowledge where it lies.

It is not too uncommon for covens to travel to known haunted locations and try to contact the restless dead. When wandering through their local abandoned psychiatric hospital, they usually come prepared as well, bringing salt for protection, sage for clarity, and other accoutrements of power to protect themselves and dispel any negative energy they may come across.

Because of their wandering nature though, these groups are also susceptible of becoming compromised by denizens of the shadow. Vampires are always looking for ghouls or an easy meal that wandered into their haven, and werewolves might be trying to find that one Fetter they need to get this ghost off their back. By being a part of one of these groups, characters gain an extra dot in Occult, Animal Ken, or Subterfuge.

## Tour Guides and Entertainers

More common around Halloween, these “ghost hunts” are often put on by historical societies or local quacks looking for a quick buck. They most often follow their itinerary in a rented van or bus, stopping off at local bars before getting to the “real stuff.”

Once the jovial atmosphere of a bar warms up the crowd, the aforementioned tour guides then travel around with the slightly buzzed amateur ghost hunters, showing them the local haunts. This is accompanied by the occasional spooky local ghost story and a stop here and there for some hot cocoa





after snapping some pictures in front of that one burnt-out church way back in the woods.

While looked down upon by some in the paranormal investigator community as charlatans or carnival barkers, these ghost hunts are putting the word out and developing a population of believers that legitimate investigators may be able to tap into later. That, and getting paid to do what you like is always nice, now isn't it? By being a part of one of these roving bands, characters gain an extra dot in Streetwise, Drive, or Investigation.

## Skeptics and Scientists

The world is defined by reason whether some people like it or not. While there is always some sort of backlash against society's intelligentsia, that doesn't mean that the academics of the world give up and stop researching. The world of the paranormal is a perfect place for the academic. Everything is left up to pure understanding and experimentation. While some scientists may try to build devices to contact the other side, others may be creating pharmaceutical concoctions to push the very boundaries of life to their breaking point in order to somehow reach into that infinite night.

The skeptics and scientists of the world are not looking for hocus pocus, they are looking for definitive answers to the not normal. These individuals look for focused and peer-reviewed scientific process to tear apart rumor and superstition. They do not want any would-be charlatan to make a profit from those looking for closure or connection. They just want answers — answers that unfortunately come at a hell of a cost sometimes. These inquisitive minds gain an extra dot in Awareness, Crafts, or Academics.

## Local Ghost Hunting Societies

A note appears in the foyer of the local supermarket, you know, on that pin board filled with all the garbage about selling used cars or looking for babysitters. This one is different though, handwritten and scrawled hastily. Someone is looking for "the truth" and anyone else that is interested should contact the number listed. Most don't follow up; why would they? It looks like the cry for help of a mad person. But there are those who are also searching. Who also need to know. Those who also desperately need to find their own, to find understanding.

There are those who start with book clubs, so innocent and pure, but wish for a better high, a better discussion, a better connection. There are those who go looking for trouble, groups of friends who take drugs and wander into low places looking for a scare and a laugh. There are those who truly do want to know what the hell is going bump in the night too, and those that get serious about the whole thing can go deeper than many others. These folks gain an extra dot in Empathy, Stealth, or Politics.

## The Obsessed

She simply can't be dead. You know it, I know it, everybody knows it. And no one is going to tell me otherwise. And *I'm going to find her.*

The obsessed are possibly the most dangerous and unhinged of paranormal investigative groups, usually built of those who, while going through the grieving process, got lost somewhere along the way. Believed to be a symptom of the



West's major issues with mortality and death, the obsessed go to extreme lengths to grasp even the faintest connection to the unknown. To some, they can be just as dangerous as anything else that stalks the night. To others, they can be powerful allies, networked into worlds other investigators could only dream of being a part of. But at their core, everything will always come back to the one they lost, to whom they so desperately seek to return. Those who follow the winding path of the obsessed can take an extra dot in Intimidation, Larceny, or Investigation.

## Celebrity Ghost Hunters

In the technological age in which we currently reside, of course there would come a time when world-spanning media corporations would attempt to cash in on the paranormal treasure trove. These television stations began combing through the ghost hunting world looking for the charismatic, the strange, those with a certain flare that made the crowds love them. These ghost hunters have some of the best equipment in the community and some of the biggest headaches. While dealing with the everyday mundane aspects of ghost hunting and exploring the paranormal such as permits and data crunching, they also must deal with the spotlight of fame and the whims of investors. These stars get an additional dot of Expression, Performance, or Technology.

## Equipment

Ghost hunters rely on a wide variety of equipment, nearly all of which depends on electricity — either from a plug and wall outlet or from batteries. This by itself can represent an Achilles' heel, as abandoned or remote places are unlikely to have working power, and batteries can drain quickly if the devices continue to run while not actively in use.

Finding more obscure equipment can be a challenge. Despite the Internet Age's relatively easy access to even bizarre items, demand for most of these things is low, and may require consulting numerous online retailers to find one with the needed device in stock.

All the basic equipment listed below will include an obstacle of some type to obtaining or using it effectively, in addition to a minimum Resources rating. This is to represent either the difficulty in acquiring it or the item's scarcity, and in the case of services it may indicate how difficult it is to access the use of facilities or their trained staff. None of the items listed are illegal to obtain or possess, though their use in certain circumstances may bring unwanted attention from law enforcement officials.

In cities and developed nations, these devices tend to be readily available. Storytellers should adjust the Resources requirements upward by one or more dots in settings that are remote, or in developing nations or areas without reliable distribution networks.

The functions of many of the devices listed can easily be duplicated by apps for smart phones or laptops. In the event one's phone or laptop malfunctions, breaks, or the batteries run down, all those apps would be useless. Since redundancy aids preparedness, having specific, single-function devices is never a total waste in the field.

Typical items commonly used by ghost hunters such as paper, pencils/pens, clipboards, and flashlights are a given: it is unnecessary to penalize characters by denying them objects so ubiquitous and readily available in modern life. In underdeveloped nations or remote locales, however, this is another matter entirely. It's important for players to be specific in regard to the equipment they have at their disposal, as things we take for granted in the developed world may be scarce or limited to specific areas elsewhere.

Equipment and Artifacts in **World of Darkness: Ghost Hunters** require dots in Resources. The Storyteller may, at their discretion, require additional dots in related Abilities.

### Laptop Computer/Tablet ••

Considering how much they can do, laptops and tablets tend to be fairly cheap. The software programs to make the device do what the operator wishes are not, however — particularly specialized software such as ghost hunters tend to use: digital sound filtering to remove ambient noise and static from sound recordings, digital photo manipulation software to clean up blurred or grainy photos, and so on. To obtain a laptop meeting the software requirements of the typical ghost hunter elevates the cost.

### Cell Phone/Satellite Phone ••

Cell phones are ubiquitous in most human-inhabited parts of the world; reliable cell phone service is not so widespread. Still, a cell phone can help keep ghost hunters in contact with each other when searching a widespread area — or when forces are divided to investigate multiple sites. Satellite phones are more universally reliable, and also substantially more expensive or outright unavailable to obtain in some places in the world. Neither cell phones nor satellite phones work well underground, and some structures can play havoc with reception, so neither is a perfect communication mode yet. Cell phones can be upgraded with an additional SIM card to work in foreign countries at a cost of +1 Resources.

### Laser Grid Light •••

This is a device for dividing an area visually using a grid of light beams. Useful for creating reference points in a video or for creating accurate maps of a small area, a laser grid light is a highly specialized tool. Expensive and challenging to obtain for the more reliable models, only the most dedicated, detail-oriented ghost hunter groups have these in their arsenal.



## Thermal Camera ••

A camera able to record unusual variations in temperature — of objects, people, and of the ambient air — can be a useful tool. There is seldom much call for such a camera among run-of-the-mill consumers, so they can be hard to find at times, and tend to be more expensive.

## Ouija Board •

Ouija boards have been associated with contacting spirits for more than a century. While rarely productive in generating any sort of verifiable evidence, they do occasionally yield remarkable results, and are often used by ghost hunters as a last resort when all other tactics have failed to make contact. Inexpensive, they are commonly found in stores — but only around October and the holidays of Halloween/All Saints Day; because of this time-specific scarcity, the Resources requirement is higher.

## EMF Meter •

An EMF meter detects electromagnetic fields. These fields are not only generated by some spirits and supernatural entities, but also by electrical wiring, circuitry, and some electronic devices, even if not in active use. While obtaining an EMF meter is a simple and fairly inexpensive matter, using it with a degree of accuracy takes practice: even seasoned ghost hunters can be fooled when encountering otherwise hidden electrical wiring. To represent this, characters using this de-

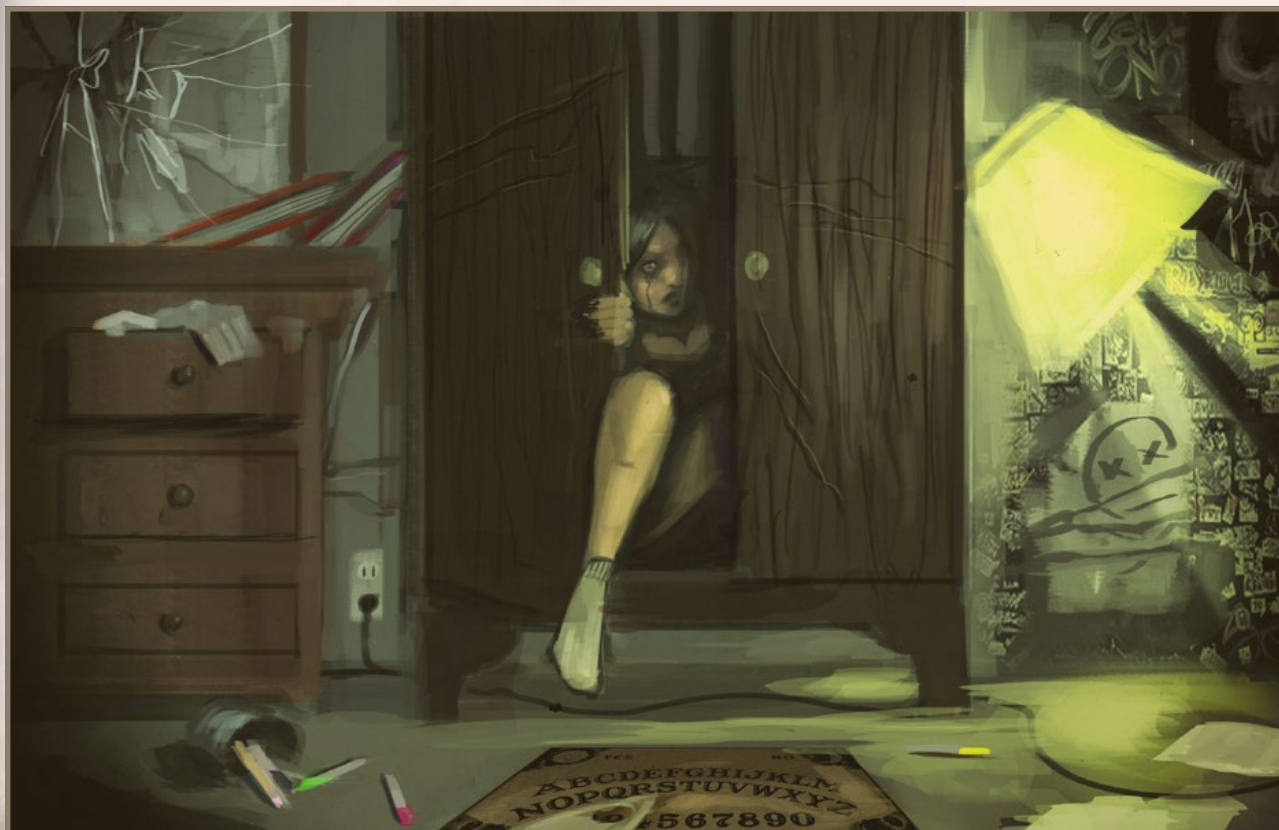
vice must succeed on a Wits + Science check (difficulty 6) to avoid accidental false positives.

## EVP Recorder ••

A more sophisticated device than a simple sound recorder, the Electronic Voice Phenomena recorder is capable of recording sounds that may not be detected by standard, voice-activated recording devices. Because of the popularity of certain ghost adventure shows, these devices have become popular with the general public as well, and are occasionally subject to inventory shortages.

## IR/ Full Spectrum Light(s) •

Many ghost hunters swear by the efficacy of full-spectrum lighting to better spot and identify non-corporeal entities. Scientifically, it's difficult to measure a significant difference between regular and full-spectrum lighting in this regard. Grow lights used by indoor gardeners share most of the same qualities as full-spectrum lighting, and are often identified as such. Full spectrum light bulbs are relatively easy to find, though one may need a lighting and electrical supply shop rather than the corner hardware store for something very specific. Finding a good, sturdy lighting fixture in which to mount and carry the bulbs can be just as challenging; a portable power supply will often be necessary, and those tend to be heavy, and awkward to carry. Rather than portable use, such lighting is best utilized at a fixed position, aimed at an area where





## New Skill: Dowsing • 10 •••••

Used for centuries to find water, gold, lost items, and other underground treasures, dowsing rods are looked upon with skepticism by everyone except those who use them. City utility workers consistently report finding long-lost water, power, or sewer lines that don't exist on modern utility maps using all manner of dowsing rods, from sticks found on-site to custom-made metal rods of copper or brass.

To use the dowsing rods, the dowser walks back and forth over the area. With a forked branch, the dowser holds both ends of the Y in a loose grip, allowing the free end to pull, point, and dip to indicate the direction of the sought object. When using two rods, the dowser holds one in each hand loosely by the handle (the shorter end of the "L"). The rods will swing back and forth, generally in unison, pointing in the direction of the sought object. When the dowser stands close to or in direct proximity to the object, the rods will cross each other, indicating the direction to be down (or up.) Dowsing can take hours to work; patience is definitely a virtue when employing the unorthodox search method. Items close to the surface will show a strong reaction from the dowsing rod; items buried more deeply will see a more subtle, but still clear, reaction.

**Skill Check:** Wits + Dowsing

supernatural events take place with some degree of regularity. Again, a power source will be required.

### Dowsing Rods •

Dowsing rods can be made from a y-shaped branch (hazel is preferred, but any branch fitting the description that comes from the search area will work nearly as well). Dowsing rods may also be made from two pieces of metal wire or very thin piping, with handles bent into one end of each wire to give the devices a distinctive L-shape. It takes practice to use dowsing rods effectively: a successful Perception + Occult roll at a +2 difficulty will serve in a pinch if the dowser is unskilled, but if the dowser has learned the Dowsing Skill, they may use Wits + Dowsing instead at no additional penalty.

### Ambient Temperature Device •

An accurate, sophisticated temperature detecting device is extremely useful for identifying temporary hot or cold spots. Not only can these spots indicate the presence of supernatural activity, they can also play havoc with many electronic devices, causing them to malfunction. Being able to avoid these spots — or at least prevent sensitive equipment from passing through them — can easily demonstrate the value of such a device. Being able to record and document temperature fluctuations may allow investigators to identify certain individual spirits by their effects upon entering an area, allowing the ghost hunters a greater degree of preparedness. Generally small and easy to carry, devices that monitor ambient temperature fluctuations are readily available and typically inexpensive.

### Camcorder •••

A portable video recording device is always useful on ghost hunting expeditions. Not only can it be used to record sights, it's also a back-up for recording ambient sounds. It

can be used to record eye-witness testimony for later study, and can also document individuals who, during an investigation, become hostile, threatening, or admit to committing crimes or acts of fraud. Cheap camcorders are abundant and plentiful; good equipment costs more, but also comes with additional features useful to a ghost hunter, such as infrared capability, or a flip-open screen for the operator to observe what's being filmed in real time. Battery life is a concern, and low-light conditions may be an impediment.

### Digital Camera •

A simple digital camera takes digital photographs, storing the images electronically on interchangeable cards. Most have multiple settings of image quality and sharpness; the sharper the image, the more memory it takes up. Most cards can easily handle 20-30 images even at the highest quality setting. Software will be needed for downloading and easy access on a laptop or other device. Also available are waterproof versions popular with snorkelers and divers. Battery life is a concern, as flash photography burns power rapidly.

The advantages of digital over print film are many. They include the ability to see the photo immediately, ability to download the photo to a laptop for more precise filtering and processing, plus the lack of accidental interference during the film developing stage. Technicians frequently decline to print photos with large, misty-looking areas, assuming those are a flaw in the film or camera, or the result of a lack of photographic skill, when those may be the very images the ghost hunter wishes to have developed!

### Pocket Recorder •

Simple sound recording devices are a most useful gadget for ghost hunters to have. They can detect and record sounds that human ears might not hear for many reasons, including other investigators speaking at the time the sound occurred.



## Using Inexpensive Gear

Sometimes common problems can be solved with low-tech solutions, and savvy ghost hunters will use whatever's on hand. For example, a simple piece of thread is one of the easiest ways to secure a ghost hunter's equipment and prevent tampering. A piece of thin thread is taped or pinned to a solid surface and, if the device is tampered with, the thread will be disturbed or even broken. Twine can be used to tie doors shut and keep them from opening due to fluctuations in air pressure. Common, inexpensive items include tape, twist ties, twigs, and broken glass, and do not incur requirements like other pieces of equipment. Once acquired, roll a successful Wits + Crafts or Wits + Stealth to ensure the item is placed as intended.

Having a voice-activated device proves most useful, particularly when it is left behind to detect and record sounds when no observer is present.

### Flashlight w/Red Lens •

Flashlights are a basic piece of equipment for anyone in the field; even a hunter with no dots in Resources should have ready access to a decent flashlight. Experienced hunters favor red gel inserts used in theater lighting; a piece of red gel covering the flashlight lens helps maintain the hunter's eyes' adjustment to low-light conditions, preventing the irritating "flash blindness" from exposure to sudden, strong light sources. Also useful: head lamps with elastic bands to secure the lamp to one's head or hat. Nothing so useful as a light that follows where one's eyes are looking...

### Night Vision Goggles •• or •••

Military-grade versions of this piece of equipment tend to be the most useful and reliable for ghost hunters; optional upgrades including increased distance magnification, infrared illuminators, and recording capability are available at three dots.

### Forensics Lab Access ••••

Finding a forensics lab with the time and capability to examine evidence of supernatural activity is difficult; finding one that will allow ghost hunters unsupervised access to such a facility is a practical impossibility. The expense of using such a facility is also of major hindrance: something as simple as dusting for and testing fingerprints can cost into the hundreds of dollars – for the supplies, but mostly for the technician's time. If this facility also happens to be a busy lab paid for by some government agency, be it local, state, or federal, expect tests to be run when and if the technicians have time. Testing and results will need to be done on the QT, even if all in the lab are sympathetic: no one wants the subsequent taxpayer outrage if word gets out that the lab is helping look for ghosts.

### Public Information Access ••

Most people in the United States are able to access a public library's microfilm/microfiche records of old newspapers.

These have been painstakingly cataloged to narrow down searches by article keyword and by date, though the search itself will still be time-consuming. For research at a newspaper office itself, access to the "morgue file" (the archive of old production flats) may be limited depending on how busy the office staff is, and whether they can devote time to showing someone around. For the more technologically savvy or travel-limited, many newspapers have their morgue files – including photos – available online. A good many of these institutions charge a fee for access to the files: this fee may be on a timed basis, a per-piece downloaded basis, or simply a flat fee to look around.

### Hunter Dot Net •••

This online forum is a relatively safe space for hunters to discuss equipment, tactics, and experiences. Secrets are passed back and forth – usually offline or by direct email – but sometimes enthusiasm wins out, and someone spills something of note for the entire forum to read. Collaborations and joint investigations are often negotiated and organized here. The forum is semi-secure and semi-private: hackers could get in easily, but the membership list is curated by an admin group, so random people don't get regular access by design.

## Books

### W Journal •••

This beat-up, spiral-bound notebook contains notes on numerous supernatural encounters by "W" and her daughter. Most encounters seem to be with corporeal entities – zombies, vampires, and other dead things – which should give any ghost hunter pause. This book has been passed down from parent to child for years, and some even have photocopied versions of the notebook. However, because of the imperfect nature of the handwritten notes, places where the ink ran thin – while visible in the original because of the indentation – are difficult to decipher in a photocopy.

Veteran ghost hunters are happy to pass this around. Most groups, upon obtaining the W Journal, make a copy by hand and then pass it on to another hunter group in clandestine meetings along quiet country roads or in seldom-used rest stops.



The W Journal provides a +2 dice bonus to tracking and combating any undead creature.

## **Ghost Hunter's Guide To The Occult ••**

This book is a good basic guide for paranormal investigators, with a strong overview and solid definitions of commonly used terms. It does not only concern itself with ghosts, but also other supernatural entities including the demonic. Considerable page count is devoted to discussion of various world religions and their views on paranormal and occult topics, which can be extraordinarily useful in the field. When consulted on a specific topic, it adds a +1 die bonus to any Occult check.

## **Tobin's Spirit Guide ••••**

This legendary tome was written by John Horace Tobin over the course of more than a decade, and first published in late 1920. It carefully catalogs all the spirits, goblins and demons Tobin and his partner encountered in their journeys to collect data for the book.

Several publishing houses suffered financial disasters after publishing their edition of Tobin's Spirit Guide — so much so that few publishers will even consider reprinting the work. The last print run is from 1967: the publisher responsible, Golden Goblin Press, was destroyed when their building and everyone in it was swallowed by a sinkhole in broad daylight 13 days after publication of the work.

Copies of the book can still be found at reasonable prices — the Golden Goblin print run was quite large (and warehoused elsewhere) so many used copies are still in existence. They show up in used bookstores only rarely: most are offered for sale online, and under cover of a certain amount of anonymity.

Tobin's Spirit Guide gives a +2 dice bonus to any attempts at capturing, questioning, or destroying any supernatural entity, particularly those of a semi-corporeal or non-corporeal nature.

## **Carnacki's Journals ••**

The journals of the famous ghost hunter Carnacki relate a number of his investigations into supernatural matters. Some of his cases are totally mundane and easily explained: a few much less so. Carnacki disappeared in 1917. Rumors of his spirit popping up in seances and dictating further of his adventures have surfaced from time to time.

This tome gives the reader a +1 die bonus to any Research check involving any haunting or ongoing supernatural activity.

## **Artifacts**

An artifact is any object that has come into contact with the supernatural for long enough that some amount of paranormal energy has been transferred to it. This transference

can range from a little to a great deal, but the more energy an object absorbs, the less predictable its effects will be and the more difficult it will be to control the object and achieve the desired effect.

## **Rusty's Radio ••**

Legends persist among the ghost hunting community of a small, portable radio that can pick up and broadcast the voices of the dead. Some say the radio was the favorite possession of someone who failed to pass over; others insist the device was cursed, or was somehow instrumental in a person's death. Whatever the case, it's become a popular myth among ghost hunters and fans of the supernatural for more than five decades.

Except it isn't a myth; the radio really does exist, and it's possible there are more than one of them. To function, the radio doesn't need power, but it does need to be switched on. Finding a portable radio in a location with strong supernatural activity may indicate the radio is one such artifact.

The only problem is, once the radio is attuned to the spirit world, it can't be turned off. Oh, go ahead and turn the knob to the "off" position if you wish, but voices will still come through the speaker, some pleading for help, others moaning in agony or wailing in despair. Some voices repeat the same phrase or sentence over and over again, eternally, as if this mantra will help them reach the afterlife someday. On rare occasions, the radio will pick up the broadcast of a baseball game or a news report from many years ago, as if somehow catching echoes of the original broadcast.

## **Ghost Magnet • to ••••**

Certain objects can acquire psychic residue, bringing them to the notice of the spirit world or perhaps just making it easier for spirits to find them during their sojourns on this side of the veil. These items become magnets for supernatural activity, and are far more curse than blessing, even for a ghost hunter.

Any object can be a ghost magnet: what is needed is something with a close, personal connection to the deceased; an object that has spent years in close proximity to spirit activity; an item that was cursed, either by supernatural means or by sheer force of will. For example, a Ouija board could be a perfect spirit magnet for any of the above reasons. However, a Ouija board attracting spirits is a bit cliché: perhaps it needs to have a particularly unusual history — a hand-made board, for example, that someone actually spilled blood over during the process of creating it. Another likely ghost magnet would be a favorite piece of jewelry — particularly if it was lost or stolen, or was worn at the time of the wearer's demise. A few other likely objects include dolls, coins, books, antiques (pocket watches, tea service sets), furniture (chair, bed, wardrobe), mirrors, stained glass windows, and portraits of the deceased, either rendered in oils or photographic in nature.



Ghost magnets increase the chance of contacting a spirit. To represent this, add 1 to 4 dice to any roll attempting to contact a ghost or investigate a haunted location. The number of bonus dice will vary depending on the strength of the object's connection to the spirit world, and on the needs of the scenario. A random strength level could also work well as an indicator or varying amounts of spirit activity, even in multiple visits to the same location.

### **Kirlian Camera ••••**

This unusual device, created by the husband-wife team of Semyon and Valentina Kirlian, is unique in its ability to reliably capture images of invisible supernatural entities. Built in the 1940s, the device looks like a largish, box-shaped camera, but the interior workings are far more complicated. The device must be charged using a hand crank that folds out of a back panel. When a photo is taken, the charge is released, creating an electro-magnetic field sufficient to fill a 10 foot x 10 foot area, in effect freezing the subject entity for several seconds. This freezing, timed to coincide with the exposure of the film, disrupts the entity's normal vibration pattern.

The camera shell is of sturdy, World War Two vintage: it is gray steel with gray canvas straps and metal fittings. The wires and complex circuitry within are of the same vintage, but considerably less sturdy. Generating the electrical charge creates significant wear and tear. Even a mechanical genius would have to completely overhaul the parts after one or two uses because of the mechanical stress involved in creating the field. The results of a successful use are nothing short of astounding: a crystal-clear image of the supernatural entity is captured on film. At one time the film for this camera had to be custom-made, but at some point someone retrofitted many of these cameras to accept 35mm film, making the Kirlian camera slightly less expensive to operate for any length of time. Some have even been jerry-rigged to use digital technology to capture up to a minute of video footage before burning out critical circuits, though these are exceptionally rare.

A number of these cameras exist; most are in the hands of Terrel & Squib personnel or affiliated individuals. They can be difficult to obtain, but a few have made their way into the hands of veteran ghost hunters. Expensive to acquire, difficult and expensive to maintain, but once the photos taken with this camera are seen, not a single ghost hunter can argue about the prohibitive costs.

Once acquired, owning the device requires the sacrifice of three Resources dots to represent the ongoing expense of upkeep. Dots lost in this way can be replaced normally.

### **Geistmann Lenses ••••**

The Geistmann Lenses are a nearly mythical set of glasses. They are rumored to exist, and people across Europe, Asia, and North and South America have testified that they've witnessed them in action, but no one will admit to owning them.

The story goes that Johann Geistmann was a highly skilled lens grinder in Dresden in the late 1700s. Geistmann was at a party, and was challenged by a visitor from Leipzig, Herman Sitzbach, owner of what was (at that time) reportedly the most haunted former brothel in Europe, to create lenses that would let him see his ghostly visitors. Geistmann delivered the lenses, and Sitzbach dutifully promised to return the next month with a written diary of what he saw. Sitzbach never returned. After wearing the glasses once on a foray into the building's wine cellar, he came back upstairs, left a note and the glasses on his desk, and hung himself in the attic of the building. The note included a warning never to wear the glasses inside his building, and from all reports, that warning was heeded by those who took care of selling off Sitzbach's estate.

The Geistmann Lenses appear at first glance to be a set of wire-rimmed spectacles, old-looking and seemingly quite frail. On closer examination, however, they appear to be more of a joke: the lenses themselves are as thick as the bottoms of glass soda bottles, and viewing anything normal only reveals an extremely blurred image. Upon viewing something supernatural, however, these lenses reveal a clear, sharp image — even of something supernaturally hidden, such as someone using the Obfuscate Discipline. These lenses are legendary among ghost hunters, and rumors of them surfacing somewhere are followed by many with great interest.

To use the lenses requires the expenditure of 1 point of Willpower for up to one hour of use. Using the lenses for more than one hour in any 24-hour period will drain one permanent Willpower from the user.

The Geistmann Lenses are difficult to acquire at best: Rumor and innuendo often lead to dead ends, and those wishing to acquire these lenses must have patience and perseverance to spare. Because of their ability to see nearly anything supernatural, certain unnamed individuals wish to make sure they are acquired and either destroyed or never see the light of day again. Someone claiming to be selling the genuine article will no doubt be the beneficiary of a bidding war to acquire these rare spectacles, but woe be unto that person if the Geistmann lenses they offer prove to be fake.

### **Ghost Trap ••**

This curious device resembles a cage, such as a marine biologist would use underwater to study sharks. The cage comes equipped with electrical terminals, and when attached to a car battery or other power source, it is capable of trapping a non-corporeal entity inside as long as the power level is maintained. The spirit trapped within may be questioned, and because of the nature of the electrical field, will answer truthfully to the best of its ability. More powerful entities — demons, elemental spirits, and divine or semi-divine presences — will not be compelled to answer truthfully.

The spirit will resent being trapped and interrogated,



and if it escapes it will return to plague without mercy those who entrapped it.

While finding one of these devices is hard, rigging the electricity to operate it is simple, though maintaining a constant power supply may be a challenge. The trap guarantees honest answers from any being sufficiently weak to be trapped inside, but dealing with ongoing containment or releasing the entity presents thornier problems.

## Orpheus App ••••

There are always people willing to go where others won't. A cell phone app has been developed that will allow the user to speak with spirits of the dead. It is not a hoax — it genuinely works, though finding willing subjects and contacting them is the difficult part. It's unclear exactly how the application really works, and there is more than a little confusion surrounding what equipment is needed for the program to operate — or if the program is actually some sort of supernatural AI. According to rumors, those who have downloaded the app to their phone or tablet report that built into it is a helpful AI assistant that guides the user through the process of setting up the app, suggests ways of finding likely subjects, and assists in making contact.

Once contacted, a spirit will discuss whatever subjects it is willing to discuss — if it is willing to cooperate at all. A suspected serial killer may drop hints now and again about the nature or location of his crimes or victims to taunt or tantalize, but many typical ghosts tends to be murder victims, or people who died suddenly with unfinished business weighing heavily on their minds. Ghosts such as these will frequently be obsessive, particularly if they think the voice on the other end of the line can help them get what they want.

Without more specific information to rely on, some speculate that contacting a spirit is likely to require leaving a cell phone at the haunted location for the spirits to answer and use. This can lead to complications, such as spirits using that phone to make a few other calls of their own, and may result in the phone developing a psychic resonance with the spirit, allowing that spirit — one not bound to a particular

location — to find the phone, even at great distances. Once the ghost hunter has made contact using the application, the “phone number” to contact the ghost(s) will be automatically stored in memory for greater ease of use, and the second cell phone will no longer be required.

Others theorize that a particular piece of specially-designed equipment is needed to use the application. This typifies the confusion surrounding the application: it's unclear whether the thing is an actual device, an application to modify standard communication technology, or a little of both. Many ghost hunters have heard of it, and seemingly all have a story about “a friend of a friend” who successfully used it, but no one has been able to identify a single, specific person who possesses or has used this application or device.

The Orpheus Group created this device/application to further its research into the spirit world, and they guard that secret access jealously. Should they become aware of unauthorized personnel using the device, they will take pains to find that person, and at the very least permanently remove the app from any unauthorized electronic devices.

Worse still, there are whispers that the application itself draws denizens of the spirit world to the user, attaching them to that person like the albatross to the Ancient Mariner. Whether this is some punishment meted out to transgressors by the Orpheus Group — or something more sinister and less controlled — is anyone's guess.

Obtaining this application should be difficult at best; the only way to acquire it without being part of the Orpheus Group is to steal it, though once having obtained and tested it and observed the remarkable results of which it is capable, ghost hunters may share it through their network of contacts. Money will definitely need to change hands to obtain this application in the first place; those in possession who are willing to sell may have an inkling of the trouble they are in, and likely seek to finance an escape. Someone spreading this technology far and wide would be deemed to deserve special attention by the Orpheus Group: the possibilities of such special attention are too unpleasant to elaborate.







# Case Files

"You look at me," I said, forcing a smile, "as if you had a dread of me."

"I was doubtful," he returned, "whether I had seen you before."

"Where?" He pointed to the red light he had looked at.

"There?" I said.

Intently watchful of me, he replied (but without sound), "Yes."

– Charles Dickens, "The Signal-Man" (1866)

Whether written in the pages of much-maligned tabloid newspapers, posted up on a ghost story blog, recorded in a cop's crime scene report, or adapted into a Hollywood blockbuster, accounts of encounters with the supernatural lace a thread through numerous media. Each thread begs a ghost hunter's attention, though sorting the wheat from the chaff is a grueling task. Some tales are contrived, over-inflated, or simple falsehoods. Others are the beginnings of deep, dark mysteries. Some, by their conclusion, compel a traumatized ghost hunter to wish they could lose all recollection of the paranormal.

Many ghost hunters establish networks and databases, systems and filters, to discern fiction from reality, recognizing the buzz words and commonalities between genuine cases. Simple algorithms succeed at cutting away egregious accounts while highlighting true tales of horror. For the ghost hunters lacking technology and contacts, a committed researcher or experienced archivist can extract these same accounts, compiling them into a scrapbook or file for their peers' review. These same researchers maintain that a human eye is better than any computer program at capturing anomalous tales from the cruff.

Whether filling online storage with case files, or making clippings from trashy magazines and sticking them to a

wall, all ghost hunters find a way to chronicle the salient tales. Some of the most renowned populate journals. These journals are prized relics among the ghost hunter community, and often find their way into the hands of other hunters, through both mundane and mysterious means.

## **Mother of two disappears — Husband blames haunted house**

My colleague Prof. Walter Pryce was the first to interview the Jacksons, before his untimely death (at the hands of the infamous Spectre Jack-o'-the-pines, I maintain). I picked up on Pryce's research and made my way to Des Moines to look into the Jackson case.

It wasn't difficult to piece together that this was more than just a simple runaway.

It should have been a children's party like any other at the Jackson household, but just after Timothy blew out the candles on his cake, mother Amy vanished into thin air, per witness statements.

No blood. No body. No crime scene.

The Jackson family moved into their metropolitan townhouse just three months ago. The incidents started soon after their arrival. Amy confided to a neighbor the house displayed



disturbing traits. At first she suspected faulty electrics — all the food in the fridge rapidly rotting on several occasions, her son's bedroom suddenly dropping in temperature at night, and lights flickering all day every Sunday — but then Amy noticed the house responding to certain activities. Whenever she was alone in the house, a smell of ammonia filled the air and she felt the urge to cry. Whenever Timothy played, she heard distant squeals of pleasure from the attic, and moans of pain from the cellar. When she and her husband made love, his gestures, sounds, and movements felt *different*, as if he were a different man, and the room heated up to unbearable levels. Amy began discussing “hauntings” and “ghosts.”

Henry grew concerned about Amy's mental wellbeing. He researched the house to put to rest all talk of a spectral infestation. His attempts to salve concerns failed. Though the previous tenants had a pleasant decade-long stay, the family occupying the house 20 years ago experienced no such luck. Just like the Jacksons, the Schleichers consisted of a man, a woman, and one boy. The wife and mother, Katherine Schleicher, reported disturbances like Amy's, though Katherine's culminated with her voluntarily committing herself to a sanitarium. She believed it the only place safe from *him*. The Schleichers divorced after Katherine opted to remain in the sanitarium indefinitely, and she still resides there to this day, though I was unable to secure an interview.

Henry told Amy about the Schleichers, and the two prepared to move the family to a hotel the weekend after Timothy's birthday. Tragically, Amy's departure did not occur as scheduled. Attendees at the party describe how Amy Jackson appeared distracted all day, constantly visiting the cellar to check on boxes of packed luggage. It was during one of these forays she vanished, and never returned. The police classify Amy Jackson as an adult runaway. Henry and his son are now without a wife and mother, and staying at the nearby Gayno Motel.

We must ask the questions — what paranormal being exists in the house? What is the *him* Katherine Schleicher cited? What draws the dead to a family composed in the style of the Jacksons and the Schleichers, and is Amy recoverable from her current state? Is the house itself hostile, and if so, what foul deed took place to set these diabolical wheels in motion?

My research tells me the house was built on the plot of an orphanage — St. Simon's — which the local authority demolished after a scandal in the early 20th century. Could the haunting be seeking retribution against mothers, for giving up their children to this house of cruelty so many years ago? Or could the scandal — an explosion in the building's cellar that led to the discovery of secret torture chambers beneath the orphanage — live on through the torment of its new residents?

While police issued an appeal for anyone with information regarding Amy Jackson's whereabouts, they dismissed my raising the subject of a haunting.

## I Heart You

**Property:** A distinctive white and bottle green yacht floating somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean, named the *I Heart You*

**Haunters:** [Suspected] Last known passengers Mia Estevez, Tobias Gluck, and Larry Shehan

**Other Related Parties:** Yacht owner Esther Duchegne

In the past year there have been 17 reports from U.S. East Coast (and Bermuda) lifeboat stations, and over 20 from ships crossing the Atlantic, in which radios intercepted a distress call from the *I Heart You*, a yacht that departed Miami over a year ago.

The received SOS is largely unintelligible, except for reported sounds of violence, including screams and pleas for help. Well-traveled sailors and rescue crews have reported a dreadful nausea after hearing the sounds, and stated they appear to reflect a fear of someone or something on board the yacht, rather than typical trouble-at-sea.

Of the boats sent to the yacht's reported coordinates (which change frequently), few locate the vessel. To date, one cruise liner discovered the yacht empty, reported its status to the relevant authorities, and sailed on. Two lifeboat crews dispatched to save the distressed passengers reported reaching the yacht, only for communications to abruptly cease and those same crews to disappear.

The last sighting of the *I Heart You* came from a trawler performing deep fishing near Bermuda's west coast. This trawler was not responding to a distress call, but discovered the yacht by chance. Three of the trawler crew boarded the heavily listing yacht, which appeared barely afloat. The trawler crew emerged from the cabin visibly unnerved. The yacht sank as they returned to their own vessel, but the three have been unable to recount what they saw.

Lifeboats have reported three distress calls from the *I Heart You* since that time, but not located the vessel.

The *I Heart You* was reported stolen last year, by owner Esther Duchegne. Duchegne's husband was lost at sea while sailing the *I Heart You*. His body never emerged, and the police accepted her story of no foul play. Her deceased husband, Louis Duchegne, was a wealthy and decadent businessman connected to drug companies Magadon Pharmaceutical and Terrel & Squib. I suspect he was hosting a party involving an array of illegal activities at the time his “death from misadventure” occurred, based on prior reports — a suspicion Esther Duchegne confirms. She still resides in Miami, and lives well from her husband's estate.

The passengers and suspected haunters Mia Estevez, Tobias Gluck, and Larry Shehan were a gang of hijackers known to prowl the Miami piers for easy pickings. CCTV captured them taking the boat out to sea. According to their families and friends (which I painstakingly traced), the voices on SOS calls resemble theirs. The trio haven't been seen since their theft of the boat.





It can be assumed the *I Heart You* is now a “ghost ship” with Estevez, Gluck, and Shehan as crew, though how they died, whether it is connected to Louis Duchegne’s death (and errant activities on-board in life), and what they require to settle their spirits, are unknown. I consider this case a particularly dangerous one, long-term, and have referred it on to several colleagues.

## Rosselini House

I’ve known of the Rosselini/ghost connection for some time, though it seems the RED Network’s *Real Haunting Stories* was oblivious. An anonymous source at the network slipped me an audio-only recording from one of their ghost hunts on a Rosselini property. I’ve transcribed it faithfully, though it’s disturbing material.

Participants are Jessica Templeton (the show’s host and medium), Elaine Brubaker (the show’s co-host and skeptic), and Sean Cockcroft (episode’s guest star and actor known for portraying Cap’n Bill Hallahan in Hallahan Fisheries commercials).

*[Recording begins 43 minutes into the footage taken from infamous purported haunting location, Rosselini House]*

**Templeton:** Can’t you feel the cold, Elaine? That means something’s in here with us.

**Brubaker:** It’s cold all right. I’m not seeing and ghouls or ghosts however.

**Cockcroft:** Woah woah woah! Ladies! Something just grabbed me.

**Brubaker:** Not me trying to grab your fishsticks, Cap’n. I’m on the other side of the room.

**Templeton:** What did it feel like? Where did it grab you?

**Cockcroft:** [stalls and then nervously laughs] Well it was freezing cold and not somewhere you want a chilly hand, if you know what I mean. Then it was all the way up my back and like, around my heart.

**Brubaker:** [laughs]  
[there’s a crash as something falls to the ground loudly]

**Cockcroft:** Jesus H. Christ! Gave me a heart attack!

**Templeton:** I can’t see what that was. It’s too dark. Can you make it out, Elaine? What’s that smell? Like rotten eggs.



Brubaker: Yeah, it's by me. Looks like a painting came off the wall.

Templeton: Don't shine a light on it! You might drive away whatever caused it!

Brubaker: Light can't drive away a breeze, Jess.

Cockroft: A breeze knocking a painting down? Come off it. Can you see what's in the painting? [shivers] I am freezing here, right to the bloody core.

Brubaker: I'm going to use my lighter. [flicks it on] Red-headed woman. This is an old painting. Really old, but amazing quality. Like, Hans Holbein style. I didn't see it when we scouted the location beforehand. There's a name carved into the frame. Looks like a rough carving. I'm going to put the flame closer.

Templeton: No no no. Something isn't right. The air. Can't you smell the sickness in the air all of a sudden?

Brubaker: It says "Rosalina."

[a whoosh of sound, reported later as the painting suddenly going up in flames, Elaine Brubaker with it]

**Brubaker:** [screams]

**Templeton:** Fuck! Shit shit shit!

**Cockroft:** [voice distorted but still recognizable] *Trespassers. Your souls will burn as mine burns.*

**Templeton:** No! Please! We're just making a documentary! We're being respectful!

**Cockroft:** [voice distorted but still recognizable] *I watch my descendants. Even those foolish enough to be duped with coin, favors, and promises of fame. You will all burn in my fires.*

**Brubaker:** [continues to scream]

**Templeton:** Please! Take them! They never believed! We'll pay your family back!

**Cockroft:** [voice distorted but still recognizable] *A merchant like the Venetians. Very well. I will take these two for my pleasure. Run along now, Jessica. I would play.*

[screams fade into the background as Jessica Templeton flees the building]

[Recording ends]

The dead bodies of Brubaker and Cockroft were recovered with no visible signs of injury, their deaths attributed to heart failure. Templeton continues to work for the network, though she refuses to comment on this recording beyond saying she believed it destroyed. Entry to Rosselini House remains difficult due to the family owners closing ranks since the incident. The last known Rosselini by the name of Rosalina dates to the Middle Ages. Such an individual would not know the English language, and would predate portraiture such as Brubaker describes in the recording.

## Whistle and I'll Come to You

My vanished peer Denise Fish received an email from one [deusvult@anonymous-liberty.com](mailto:deusvult@anonymous-liberty.com) last week, which I only found upon searching the laptop in her abandoned office. For obvious reasons, I've not reported her disappearance to the cops.

Deusvult tells her about an alternating whistling she was investigating in New York, which she'd described as "harmless" previously. He corrects her, insisting it's a lure of some kind. Deusvult was unable to reach Denise by phone, so his email reads insistently, as he demands she stop attempting to locate the sound's source.

Deusvult provides a number of links to accounts, some going back centuries, in which the whistling has led people like us to the netherworld, trying to get us to trace it into the hollow foundations of an old abandoned building, to a disused section of sewer drain, or into the most decrepit mausoleums in the cemetery.

I shan't be following the noise, should I hear it, but I've been disseminating the warning to those who need to know.

I attempted to email Deusvult separately, in an effort to foster a new, informed colleague. Sadly, the email failed to deliver, rendering his or her identity a mystery.

## Hikers Vanish on the Fens

A bizarre story reached me today, in the form of newspaper clippings from England. A local newspaper in Ely, Cambridgeshire, reported on search parties combing the Fens, hunting for traces of the three-man hiking team of Norman Crosswell (58), Lester Cosgrove (61), and Jeremy Melville (67).

According to reports, the avid hikers ventured forth from Huntingdon to pursue a cross-country sojourn, stopping off in the historic village pubs crisscrossing the county. The three men's partners describe them as "childhood friends who have never gone missing before."

The hikers' last known location compounds the mystery of their disappearance. Police statements confirm witnesses interacted with them at The Crown in the village of Earith, where they told the landlady and one of the patrons of their intention to make their next stop in a village named Bremerton. Not having heard of the village, landlady Kelly Lyme



enquired as to its location. She described Lester Cosgrove aggressively insisting that a German-accented man dressed in gray directed them to a pub named The One-Eyed Ploughman in the mentioned village. They encountered this man standing on the bank of the River Ouse, near Earith.

Local historians and police are now researching the village and pub names, though it is assumed if the two existed, they were historic. German immigrants populated several Cambridgeshire villages in the 18th and 19th centuries, naming them in their language before Anglicising them during the First World War. Many of these villages disappeared or were absorbed into towns. The military repurposed several in the 1930s, relocating the populations to new habitation in Ely and Cambridge.

The Cambridgeshire countryside still holds many abandoned villages, though none match the name Lester Cosgrove gave to the pub landlady. The investigation for the hikers, and search for the ghost village and man from the riverbank, is ongoing.

Perhaps when I receive a new injection of funds, a trip to the United Kingdom may be in order.

## The Marten Family

**Property:** The Marten family home, in 12 Stilt St, Tacoma, Washington

**Haunters:** The Marten family: father Hector, mother Iris, daughters Rose and Lily, son Gabriel

**Other Related Parties:** Orpheus Group

The Marten family poses an interesting challenge for amateur ghost hunters. Each of the five family members was murdered recently during what the police state was a home invasion, or a burglary gone wrong. The police have not charged any individuals for the killings, though it does not appear from my research that a need for justice or vengeance keeps these ghosts clinging to the material plane. Rather, each family member has a different motive, most of which are impenetrable to my shallow digging. Each ghost seems wracked with self-loathing or a hatred for another of their number. This resentment manifests whenever ghost hunters attempt to delve into the property or family history. Note that the ghosts are unified in turning the property itself against intruders.

To date the Marten household has not been reoccupied. At first, I believed this was due to the ill reputation afflicting a building so recently the home to violent crimes, but I now understand sales are promptly shut down by a corporation I've encountered before, named the Orpheus Group. From my basic surveillance, it appears at least one of their agents sees the house as a kind of supernatural petri dish. He visits often. Rather than encourage the spirits to move on, Orpheus studies the five deceased occupants. I do not know the reasons behind Orpheus' practices. They operate legally, but too many rumors accompany what the company secretly enacts against its enemies.

For an aspiring ghost hunter, these five restless dead offer an opportunity, though I've struggled to communicate with them at length. A new investigator might do well to cut their teeth on such a spirit, with what I hope is a simple, easily resolvable attachment to our world. Similarly, if the identity of their killer could be obtained from one of the family members, and a ghost hunter compiled evidence presentable to the police, one could earn valuable contacts in law enforcement.

I have to remind myself to be wary of the five dead. A now-deceased hunter made the mistake of underestimating the Marten family, and in his probing and attempts at interrogating the dead, provoked their Spectral sides. In their calculating anger, the ghosts convinced him it would be a fine thing for him to cut open his wrists and join them. The deceased hunter has not joined the ranks of the spirits as far as I can tell.

## The Dead Light

You know the tale of Will o' the Wisp. Damned spirits haunting marshes and swamps, posing as helpful lantern lights. They take a safe traveler off her path and down, down, down into the mire. Whether these entities do it knowingly or not, and however they spring into being (I suspect they're the spirits of the drowned), most anyone knows to avoid the light. Many ghost hunters feel there's nothing to gain from trying to find out the truth of any of it, and just ignore them.

I have a couple of friends down on the island, who happened to be getting high on the beach one night. They all saw a glowing ball of light coming in from offshore, but there was no boat or buoy floating their way. It got closer and closer. It freaked them out but good.

Now, they were high, but they all saw the light. One of them captured the glowing orb on his phone. It looks real as day. The light got closer and closer until it disappeared under a nearby pier. Did they go to the pier? Of course not. They know the Will o' the Wisp story because I told them. They came to me instead.

I thought "big deal," because floating lights aren't really my specialty or field of interest, but a bunch of the elderly residents on the island saw this light too, and when they saw it going back out to sea, they followed! They followed it out to the ocean without a boat, a diving suit, or even a fucking lifesaver. Of course, they drowned and floated back in the following morning. It was a terrible event, and made national headlines.

I know a guy who calls himself a shaman. He says the light is the life of youth and the death of the old. It comes in to shore to experience life like a young man or woman. That means this light might actually turn into someone or something and have sex, get high, get wasted, or whatever. Then when it's done, it heads back out and takes its life fee with it.

Now the question becomes, how do you combat a sea wisp? And that's where I'm stumped. Until it shows again,



I'm clueless, and at the same time I don't fancy a constant coastal vigil, just in case it hypnotizes me and lures me out to the dark, drowning depths.

## The Letter Writer

There's a hotel in the countryside that's long been reported as haunted. It's been host to murders throughout the 20th century, the M.O. always identical. The perpetrator of the killings in the first half of the century was identified as one H.J. Azzarelli, who upon being charged, summarily took his own life. Yet, murders mirroring Azzarelli's methods continued all the way up to an event this year, where a young man killed his partner by drowning him in the bath, pulling the victim's feet into the air while bringing his own foot down

onto the drowning party's chest, preventing him from being able to surface for air.

This was one of Azzarelli's preferred techniques.

While rumors of the hotel's haunted status persisted, no evidence arose, and ghost hunters such as myself found spirits impossible to detect — even those of the murder victims, which struck me as extremely odd. A breakthrough came with the latest murder.

Each killing accompanied a fire in some part of the hotel. On the most recent occasion, someone attempted to start a fire, but for some reason the fuel didn't burn. The singed source was a letter, discovered in a laundry chute. I transcribe its contents now:

*Dear Resident*  
*You appear to be under the impression there is fun to be had in staying at a supposedly haunted hotel.*  
*I assure you there is not.*  
*You may believe this note, slid beneath your door, is some elaborate prank.*  
*I assure you it is not.*  
*This building is haunted. I haunt it. This place is mine. I killed the couple on the 12th Floor in 1921. I murdered the girl on the 3rd Floor in 1936. I slaughtered the family on the 5th Floor in 1952. Those murders in the following decades? Not caused by me directly. I was dead by that point. But I got into the heads of those inclined, and a dozen deaths followed.*  
*Why am I warning you?*  
*I know you will not run.*  
*I know you will laugh.*  
*I know the ante has been upped.*  
*Just know that at this point, one of your fellow residents, a normal man, a quiet man, has suddenly been possessed with a resolve to kill someone just like you.*  
*Enjoy your stay.*  
*H.J. Azzarelli*

The letter spawns many mysteries. The ghost of Azzarelli is a puppeteer type, though if it delivered its letter to the victim, why was it then burned? Have past victims all felt inclined to burn the correspondence, if this threat is a recurring one? Where does Azzarelli hide when he's not possessing a victim, and what happens to the ghosts of his kills?

## Alley to Nowhere

**Property:** An alley between Ballard Corp. Administration Office and the Rubik Building

**Haunters:** Unknown — the haunting manifests as a disorientating fug that appears to drain vitality

**Other Related Parties:** Joseph Drake, the homeless man who reported the phenomenon, and his unknown, Scottish-accented interviewer

An anonymous party sent me a copy of an article from an old *Reader's Digest*, in which the "Alley to Nowhere" was first described. In the article published two decades ago, an unnamed reporter interviews a homeless man named Joseph Drake, who tells of an alleyway in uptown Chicago where a number of his friends lost their minds or lives.

In Drake's story, the alley — warm in all weather and mostly sheltered from rain due to overhangs from both adjacent buildings — saps the memories and energy from all who sleep



there. I deemed the story brief, forgettable, and not linked to a haunting, but a vlog uploaded last week led to this file's reopening. In the video recorded recently (judging from the HD quality), a man identifying himself as Joseph Drake claims to an unseen, Scottish interviewer that someone's pierced "the veil," he's seen "the Tempest," and his friends are "Spectres" outraged at their untimely deaths. His use of vernacular common to the undead I know brings this story to the foreground.

Initial research and reconnaissance garnered little relating to the alley's paranormal status. There are no recorded violent deaths in the vicinity, the buildings on either side were not constructed over burial grounds, and no architecture or markings of occult importance exist in or near the alley. Drake's report from twenty years prior is, however, correct: the alley is a natural shelter for the homeless, and coroner records show a high number (perhaps greater than 30) of destitute individuals died there of "natural causes" since 1990.

Records pertaining to people losing their minds are harder to trace, which is why I would like to speak with Joseph Drake. In the video he appeared younger than I imagined for the individual quoted in the *Reader's Digest* article, but I assume it is the same man. I have no confirmed record of his whereabouts, but judging from his apparel in the vlog, he now works in a kitchen. His interviewer's identity and objective remain a mystery.

I believe it important to investigate the businesses of the Rubik Building and Ballard Corp., the former of which is registered as a company established for "artistic innovations," though further information is difficult to obtain without access. The latter is a holding company for investments and property throughout Illinois. While I have no evidence the two are involved in foul play, their continued presence at the site since the first reports of these events may be pertinent. Of note, Horatio Ballard (president of Ballard Corp.) is a popular and successful business mogul, and not to be crossed without a strong legal team. His name made the news recently after his company publicly blew the whistle on former business partners and confirmed money launderers Celtic Bankers PLC, resulting in the ongoing trial of director Rupert Dunsirn. I hold historic evidence of a Dunsirn family dabbling in black magic in the 19th century, which may provide a tenuous link.

## When the Clock Strikes 13

My mentor, the great Patric Ney, has passed on. Yet, I have hope he exists still as a spirit. His intention was always to counsel myself and other mystery seekers from beyond the grave.

When he discovered he was dying of cancer, he sent me a letter that reads as follows:

*Lord willing and the creek don't rise, this is, I hope, not the last letter I send you. By simply searching the terms I've added in italics, you should find stories (reputable and not) regarding my paranormal encounters. Some have even been made into TV movies.*

*In my life I've become attuned to the supernatural. I've seen things the mundane mind would describe as beyond reality, or attempt to rationalize with piecemeal scientific theory. Yet, I know what I've seen.*

*I've witnessed a spectral train pass through a tunnel near Brighton, a reflection of a locomotive that crashed over a century before. The passengers still scream as it tears along at uncontrollable speed. (Portslade Rail Crash of 1872)*

*I've felt the cold arms of a dead lover wrapped around me. She was never my lover, and yet she clung on as if she never wanted to let go. (The Constricting Ghost of Marie-Anne Chatain, Paris)*

*I faced a child possessed by something elemental and visceral, an undead embodiment of hate and spleen. I was forced to kill the child to slay the entity. It is fair to say that while the being is gone, it haunts me still. (The Bile Spirit of Birmingham, Alabama)*

*I've lived in a house so utterly condemned to the undead that the floors wanted to devour my feet, the walls dripped with ectoplasm, electricity coursed visibly from socket to socket, and anything not bolted down attempted to hurl itself against me. (No. 6 Burden Road, Glasgow)*

*These events grow in frequency. Perhaps it's my ill health making them so increasingly visible. Or perhaps whatever separates us from the world of the dead weakens as our perceptions of reality grow ever thinner.*

*I met one woman who claims to know the truth of the dead. Radhika Suryanarayanan calls herself a "Chakravanti" in tune to the ways of death. In days of old she would be called a necromancer, or*



*witch. In these times, she is my closest confidante, and a valuable ear. I recommend you seek her expertise, should you ever visit the university of Delhi.*

*Radhika says the clock of life is past midnight, and soon will strike 13. When this occurs, the Floodgates shall open, and the dead shall dance among us. She is assured in this, and so I am also.*

*How can we stop it? We must slow the clock. We must perform exorcisms, just as I neutralized the ghosts of starved dogs baying in Count Vigo's castle (The Hell-Hounds of Nagydorog, Hungary); we must appease the dead, just as I counseled the maudlin spirit of race-violence victim Benjamin Bell (The KKK Suicide Spate, Fort Myers, Florida); we must understand the realm of the dead, by visiting places marred by human tragedy (The Ghost Mines of La Rinconada, Peru).*

*I hope this is not the last of my letters, but I am old, and I know the cancer wishes to claim me. I hope this galvanizes you, and that if I die before I can offer you further advice, you might find my untroubled spirit haunting my family home, Lagoon Lodge, in Alberta, Canada.*

*Do not blind yourself with mundanity.*

*Patric Ney*

## The English Hitchhiker

My friend dontfuckwithchuck told me about the hitchhiker ghost operating along the southeast coastline a few months back, at one of our summits. As it sounded like a nonchalant entity — states its destination, disappears once it arrives, creeps out the driver but otherwise leaves him or her unharmed — I didn't think it worth investigating. But then I heard about "the Englishman heading west."

At first I thought it was the same ghost: hikes mostly around Florida and Louisiana, gets picked up, gives his courier the chills. Except this one has some variations. He holds a sign out that reads "Englishman heading west," which almost guarantees someone will pick him up. During the ride, he starts threatening the driver, and blood (or something like it) seeps into the passenger seat. He forces the driver to speed up to over 90 mph, at which point he disappears, leaving the driver to slow down or crash.

Drivers who refuse the Spectre's command find their car stalling unexpectedly, at which point the driver suffers a massive cardiac arrest. Some have survived to relay the experience, though most accounts originate from passengers sat elsewhere in the vehicle. Recently, the hitchhiker hit a bus. The driver refused to play ball and suffered a heart attack, at which point the bus started up again and sped into a swamp. Only one passenger survived, and with major injuries, relaying the tale to questionable media outlets.

Is it normal for a ghost to change its M.O. like this? It sounds like the hitchhiker is getting more violent, if he can now take control of the vehicle after the driver's death. What do we know of the "Englishman heading west" and how do we stop him?

Well, dontfuckwithchuck just provided me with an update, in which he advised strongly against hunting this ghost.

He believes the English Hitchhiker is a deceased serial killer named Percy Towlson. In life he murdered a bunch of people (16 at best guess) who made the mistake of allowing him into their car, until one intended victim fought back and stabbed him with his own knife. His killer is a woman named Marsha Quinn. The court pardoned her for her defensive actions and she now lives in New Orleans.

Chuck's research tells him the English Hitchhiker only appears to female drivers, and only when the weather's bad. We believe he's seeking vengeance for what he deems a premature death, but for obvious reasons we're not going to bundle the elderly Marsha Quinn into a car just so he can achieve satisfaction.

It seems the English Hitchhiker is getting more powerful. At first he only manifested at the truck stop from which Quinn picked him up, and only when it was raining. Now he travels between states, and seems capable of taking control of vehicles. As his location changes regularly, an exorcism is out of the question, and setting up bait so he gets into one of your cars is strictly discouraged.

Chuck repeated that I am not to hunt the English Hitchhiker. To quote my good friend, "He WILL kill you."

## OK

Ghosts who make the effort to communicate with us calmly are among the more bizarre of spectral beings.

I recently encountered the "OK" ghost, so named due to her writing in victims' diaries, her entries always punctuated with an "OK" along with greasy or bloody fingerprints in the margins. She tends to write one day ahead of the person she's harassing.

In one respect, the OK ghost seems friendly enough. Indeed, she just seems to want a friend. It's when her mor-



tal housemate acts alarmed, insists she leave, or, God forbid, writes an angry message back to OK to tell her to fuck off, that her attitude changes.

My encounter with OK followed the suicide of honorably discharged Corporal Jennifer Huang. Huang's death came as a devastating surprise to her family, and her father called me in. He believed something supernatural was at play, and sure enough, I discovered OK's diary entries following Jennifer's own.

The diary reads as any other might, until Huang starts talking about someone watching her at night, and needing to sleep with the light on. Huang's entries become increasingly agitated, and she threatens to sleep with a gun beneath her pillow. It's at that point OK starts writing, and I quote:

"Sorry pal, but guns are dangerous, OK? I had to unload the clip, OK? You'll find it behind the bookcase along with the shredded pages of your diary prior to this one. I am hurt and offended you want me gone, OK? I just want a friend. A real good friend, OK? Offend me again by calling me greasy or writing that you want me out and I will fucking end you, OK?"

Jennifer doesn't move out, or tell anyone about the writing in her diary. No doubt she feared the stigma that follows those in her profession claiming mental illness. Jennifer's own diary entries attempt to interact with OK's, but each one of her statements is aggressive. She claims to be ready for whatever OK's bringing to bear. OK answers the final diary entry as follows:

"OK. You were warned. I'll look forward to you joining me, in the walls, in the floor, in the ceiling. OK?"

Jennifer Huang cut herself open in a way so violent the initial police report stated homicide as the cause. Eventually, they proved she was the only person with access to the flat, and had to rule the death a suicide.

I'm still trying to track someone willing to write to OK, and draw her attention.

## Kiss Barrels

**Property:** Various (see below)

**Haunters:** The victims of serial killer Béla Kiss

**Other Related Parties:** The archaeologist Dr. Stefan Müller, and possibly Béla Kiss (see below)

From the turn of the 20th century through to the commencement of the Great War, the Hungarian serial killer Béla Kiss strangled dozens of female victims, pickling them in alcohol and storing their bodies in large metal drums. Though police ultimately discovered his victims, Kiss disappeared during the tumult of the First World War. The legend of Béla Kiss faded, and the world moved on.

This premature closure of the Kiss case may have been in error, the casked corpses found on his property just the tip of the iceberg. An archaeologist named Stefan Müller unearthed corroded barrels in a Vienna basement six months ago, con-

taining further bodies, and a sealed letter marked with a Dresden address. The Dresden address — the building long since demolished and rebuilt following the Second World War's firebombing campaign — contained one intact barrel secreted in the earth. Again, another body, another letter, this time pointing to a church in Rotterdam. As of last week, 17 more barrels have been located, across Europe, America, and Mexico. Disturbingly, corrosion and decomposition evidence indicates the killer interred the most recent body within the last decade. Worse, the sealed letter found at the most recent location, in Mexico City, was damaged to the point of illegibility. If there are further barrels, I do not know their locations.

While Interpol attempts coordinating international task forces to discover the truth behind these barrels, the case comes to my attention courtesy of Müller. The archaeologist didn't dig into the earth in Vienna on a whim — he states the dead directed him. While the police dismissed his claims, and ruled him out as a suspect, he vociferously protests to any press that the spirit of a woman named Barbara Reiner possessed him and brought him to the cellar of his initial discovery. I reached out to Müller, and interviewing him, he stated Reiner is still within him, enjoying her new lease of life while eroding his personality. Müller is currently desperate, as Reiner states she can only move on when her killer dies. She says a clutch of spirits like her exists, all angry, bound, and raging against their imprisonment.

I asked Reiner — via Müller — how she could possess the archaeologist. She did not know, but felt as if they shared a connection. Research revealed the two are in fact related, albeit three generations removed. Her sisters in death are unlikely to manifest in the same way, but are evidently responsible for horrors afflicting the areas in which their killer buried them. Apparently since their exhumation they're stronger and less controllable, no longer linked to their bodies or their metal tombs. A brief survey of the burial locations in Dresden, Rotterdam, and Calais shows this to be the case.

My objectives on this case are manifold, though investigation may be the primary concern. While I could spend my time hunting and managing the exorcism of each of the murdered women, it would expedite matters to interview the most recent victim in Mexico City to see if I can determine the next drop point, potentially tracking the killer. I must prepare to face the possibility of the killer being something more or less than human, as it appears he (if we assume it to be Béla Kiss, based on Reiner's testimony) has operated for over a century.

Béla Kiss is a notorious figure with a distinctive appearance. Routine sightings in the early part of the 20th century drop off by the Second World War, when I assume he was in Dresden. Modern face recognition technology may assist in locating him.

I'll be using caution when approaching this individual, if I successfully trace his whereabouts.







# Storytelling

If any of [my stories] succeed in causing their readers to feel pleasantly uncomfortable when walking along a solitary road at nightfall, or sitting over a dying fire in the small hours, my purpose in writing them will have been attained.

– M.R. James, British novelist (1862-1936)

Chronicles inspired by **World of Darkness: Ghost Hunters** can intersect with existing **20th Anniversary** games or can be run for a group of mortal characters who either suspect that ghosts are real or *know* they are. This chapter explores common myths and superstitions the Storyteller can turn into narrative tools, tips for managing the pace, and suggestions for introducing ghost hunters and ghosts into an existing chronicle as player characters and as antagonists.

## Hollywood and the Occult

Modern-day ghost hunters have always been exposed to ghosts in some fashion through the vehicle of historic and contemporary media. Ghost stories and campfire tales were told long before the first Hollywood movie studios were established in 1912, and many early films from both sides of the Atlantic explored retellings and popular myths. *The Haunted Castle* (1896) or *Le Manoir du diable*, a French-produced silent film, and the British short film *Photographing a Ghost* (1898) both saw release in the United States, for example. Most American ghost movies, outside of the Chicago-produced *A Christmas Carol* (1908), were not produced until after the

Great War. These include *The Headless Horseman* (1922), *The Live Ghost* (1934), and Disney's *Lonesome Ghosts* (1937).

Hollywood's fascination with ghosts has only increased since the early days of cinema; since the 1940s, studios have gone on to produce several animated films and television shows that range from movie-inspired series such as *Topper* (1953-1955) to *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018). Despite their prominence across multiple genres, reality television has proved that modern audiences are hungry for more ghost stories told in new and dangerous ways.

Paranormal-themed television shows, such as Leonard Nimoy's *In Search Of...* (1976-1982), have always incorporated ghosts. Ghost-centric shows are more recent, however, and quickly led to the creation of paranormal reality TV. Debuted in 1996, *Ghosthunters*, a British TV series aired on the Discovery Channel, documented the haunted Chingle Hall and paranormal sightings of Roman legionnaires in York and Essex. Early series like these took the approach that ghost hunting required a scientific background, knowledge of historical events, and experience with paranormal investigating. Not long afterward, shows began approaching the supernatural with more of a sense of flair and grandeur, blending live entertainment with proof of the otherworldly – captured on film for a global audience. *Ghost Adventures* (2008-present)



## For the Storyteller: Benevolent and Redeemable Spirits

In the World of Darkness, most ghosts will defy a ghost hunter's expectations. Ghosts will not be gentle souls or wayward spirits who need a spectator's help to move on; they are often more dangerous than the average ghost hunter might suspect. An aggressive ghost could be misclassified as a poltergeist or an "angry" spirit that must be sated and put to rest. A cold, corpse-like body that lashes out with its vampiric claws could easily be misidentified as a living mortal who's been possessed.

Stereotypes of "lost" spirits of soldiers from a forgotten battlefield, remorseful sinners, or tragically murdered lovers can be used to hook players into an investigation filled with red herrings and misdirection. Maybe the ghost of a creepy soldier is actually one of the Nosferatu who needs the characters to find a ghoul who's gone missing. Maybe the guilty clergyman is not cursed after all, he's simply a werewolf who needs help stopping the forces of corruption. Or, maybe the tragically murdered lovers are wraiths who spend their unlives tricking innocents into falling for their schemes.

Mortals who accept favors from ghosts or try to help them move on are basing their decisions on their own in-character knowledge of the supernatural, and not what their players know about the World of Darkness. As the Storyteller, don't be afraid to play with expectations by nurturing the player characters' beliefs and superstitions, especially when they're wrong.

is the longest-running show of its kind, drawing techniques from documentaries to build the case that the paranormal is not only real, it's omnipresent. Of course, all you need is the right equipment and a pinch of belief.

Paranormal reality television shows are so popular it's hard to find a ghost enthusiast who hasn't seen or heard of them. Many of the shows have either been debunked or criticized by members of the ghost hunting community, and paranormal investigators warn that they actively put amateurs at risk. A supernatural investigation rarely proceeds the way it's presented on television, and just because a ghost hunter buys an EMF detector doesn't mean they know how to use it.

The prominence of ghosts in entertainment, when combined with the popularity of paranormal reality TV, spells disaster for amateur investigators who glean knowledge of the supernatural from the stories they love to read and watch. Relying on their senses, amateur ghost hunters believe everything they see, hear, and feel — not realizing they might be generating a reaction based on their preconceived notions about a specific location. Many paranormal investigators are painfully aware that identifying and proving the existence of the supernatural requires a lot of patience and testing to sort tricks of the imagination from truth. Some take the approach of a skeptic, while others believe the best approach is to "trust but verify" using redundant data collection systems and multiple methods of analysis.

### What Mortals Believe

If the popularity of reality television shows are any indication, most mortals believe that the supernatural is real — up to a point. Many people are willing to talk about their experi-

ences in a dilapidated Victorian mansion or what happened when they walked through a centuries-old forest in the dead of night. Often, the average person is willing to accept that a ghost is real; when a loved one dies, they'll visit a medium or even participate in a séance. They're far less likely to believe a vampire is lurking in the sewers or that one of their friends is a werewolf.

People are fascinated with ghosts because they believe that spirits are visible proof that an afterlife exists. One of the most common fears — a fear of dying — is often eclipsed when spiritual beliefs morph into deeply-held certainties about how, when, and why ghosts are created. Many mortals want to believe that being virtuous in life will matter after death, that how they die determines whether they'll become a ghost, and that if their lifedidn't go as planned some curse or haunting was to blame.

Beliefs vary widely between cultures and don't always line up with reality. Storytellers can draw on character beliefs to draw out social and psychological conflicts during a chronicle. The player characters facing a horrific threat won't always agree on how to deal with the supernatural, because their individual approaches are informed by their beliefs in addition to the knowledge they've acquired. For this reason, the Storyteller is encouraged to sketch the beliefs of Storyteller characters when creating them, to help shape encounters. An atheist character who primarily relies on science to inform their next steps will react very differently to the image of a bleeding religious icon than a Christian or Buddhist character might. A skeptic may always be searching for a rational explanation even when there's none to be found. Sometimes, Storyteller characters may even temporarily or permanently shift their beliefs to explain their experiences with the supernatural.



Core assumptions are important for Storytellers to leverage as tools that will shape what the antagonist's next steps are. The key to balancing the antagonist's actions against the player characters' beliefs is to lean on the team's expectations. For example, a group of paranormal investigators who believe ghosts are real will want or expect to encounter them. A ghoul protecting their regnant's lair might toy with them by raising or lowering the thermostat in certain places, walking up and down a creaky set of stairs, or forcing certain doors to open and shut when no one is around. If that same group were all skeptics, the ghoul might create the same effects with noticeable traps to ensure the ghost hunters "clear" the building. Skeptics will account for every noise and shadow, seeking rational explanations even when there are none to be found.

Player characters who belong to an organization found in Chapter Three: Ghost Hunting Organizations possess a deeper understanding of the supernatural than unaffiliated characters do. When that's the case, the Storyteller is encouraged to test the group's beliefs and commitment to their selected organization by introducing allied and rival Storyteller characters from other orgs.

## Elements of a Case

In most cases, ghost hunters and paranormal investigators will treat each haunt as a mystery they must solve. This neatly breaks up each mystery into several manageable components. Cases involve several pieces that range from researching a location to getting permission to operate on site. These components can take time and effort to acquire; each piece enhances the thrill of the hunt and adds the potential for conflict with other characters.

Though every haunt may differ in some way, the player characters should deal with the reality of hunting ghosts in a world that doesn't acknowledge, and actively tries to hide the presence of, the supernatural. Almost every haunt will present logistic obstacles the player characters must overcome to perform their investigation. These include:

- *Permission to operate on site.* The player characters' resources will affect how, when, and if they are granted permission to conduct investigations on site. A group of reality TV-based ghost hunters will have more resources at their disposal than a lone paranormal investigator. Groups that don't have permission could bribe property owners, or be arrested for breaking and entering if they're not careful. Permissions will vary widely depending on the location and usage of the site; a public building will demand different accessibility logistics than a private home.
- *Permission to interview witnesses.* Despite the availability of information online, groups will want to conduct face-to-face interviews to verify what they've read or extract additional testimony. Witnesses, however, may

not want to be interviewed, and their reluctance might speak to other issues they're dealing with. Witnesses who are avoiding the spotlight may have been warned not to speak to the press or they might simply want to pretend nothing out of the ordinary had ever happened.

- *Access to historic site data.* Blueprints, dated newspaper articles, library archives, and non-digitized information offer important clues for paranormal investigators about specific locations and their owners. The age, type, and location of the building will inform what information is available and how groups can access it. A haunted German hotel built in 1901 will have survived both World War I and II; a similar hotel in San Francisco may have been rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake. Add in challenges created when new houses are built on top of ancient land, and the player characters will have multiple mysteries to unravel about a property's history and owners.
- *Relationships with law enforcement.* Some mysteries may churn up evidence that a murder had been committed at a site, or characters might stumble across a thief or attacker. Smart groups will have a plan in place should they find something that may be considered illegal or incriminating. Some investigators might bribe cops on the local force or befriend an officer who's willing to leverage their connections in exchange for information. Other officers may stand in the characters' way and act as obstacles preventing them from conducting investigations.
- *Means to record and acquire on-site data.* Encounters with the supernatural will generate testimonies that investigators may use to verify whether a site is haunted. Once the group is on location, however, they'll need to figure out the best way of recording data and verifying their own experiences. Savvy groups will possess different types of equipment to get the information they need and will stash some of their gear in a vehicle nearby.
- *Ways to deal with environmental hazards.* The layout of a building and its power supply will affect the efficiency of the hunt. Power outages, whether they're caused by a supernatural entity or a clipped wire, can wreak havoc on ghost hunters who depend on electric equipment. Broken stairs that cut the group's access to the second floor can halt an investigation until a ladder can be found. Centuries-old cellars can be filled in, walls can be bricked up, and windows can be boarded over, preventing anyone from peering inside.
- *Access to health care.* Environmental hazards ranging from splintered wood and rusty nails to clever trip wires can puncture skin or cause other injuries. Ghost



hunters don't always have the medical expertise to patch up wounds or stabilize a broken limb. Figuring out in advance how to deal with injuries is a smart way to ensure the safety of a crew — especially in situations where a site proves to be far more dangerous than they initially anticipated.

- *Methods for handling trauma.* Wraiths and other supernatural entities who are entrenched at a site do not want to be disturbed and will go on the offensive should a group of investigators trespass on their turf. Their attacks aren't always physical, however, and the nightmares the supernatural can induce may result in temporary or lasting trauma. The player characters will need to overcome their fears before dealing with the threat or proceeding with an investigation, and their encounters may have lingering effects.
- *Access to transportation.* Not to be overlooked, paranormal investigators should have access to a reliable vehicle they can park near the site. While vehicles, like gear, can be stolen, they are a crucial means of transporting equipment and personnel, and making a fast getaway if needed. Without some method of transportation, teams will have to figure out how to get to and from a site, visit witnesses, and utilize public resources when they need to.
- *Support from other characters.* Encounters with the supernatural can incur a range of reactions, from disbelief to paranoia. The player characters may strongly suspect that ghosts are real, but that doesn't mean everyone else around them does. Reactions from Storyteller characters will shape the ghost hunting experience; a character who's convinced the player characters are on the right path will do more to support them financially, emotionally, or physically than one who isn't.

One thread that a lot of ghost hunts have in common is the lure of history and unsolved murders. Storytellers should treat a haunted site as if it were a character in itself by drawing inspiration from real-world haunted locations, historic crime scenes, and cold case files. Players will typically latch on to a location if they sense there's something otherworldly worth investigating.

To avoid forcing countless dice rolls for clues, give evidence to Storyteller characters who are vested in the case, concentrating on what they might have learned from other characters. Maybe a teenager has accidentally learned their still-living grandfather was a serial killer, and they're torn between helping the victims' families and their own familial loyalty to their grandfather. Maybe a bereaved lover is being tormented by their recently-deceased fiancé, but they feed the ghost hunters false information because any contact with their beloved is better than none in their mind. Or, maybe the victim that the characters are investigating is an accom-

plise to murder.

Research, stake-outs, finding permits, and setting up equipment is all part of being a paranormal investigator — but it doesn't have to be boring or drag down the story's pace. The emphasis in a ghost hunting chronicle should always be on the player characters and what motivates them to investigate the paranormal. Storyteller characters that intersect, block, and cooperate with the investigators will enhance the plot by giving them information, red herrings, and new obstacles they must overcome to unravel the mystery they're exploring.

The presence of ghost hunting organizations, such as the Arcanum, adds an additional layer of intrigue. To manage this layer, clearly outline what an organization's agenda is on a case-by-case basis to avoid introducing meandering sub-plots that never get resolved.

## Handling Fear as Constant

Fear is a challenging emotion to maintain in a well-paced chronicle, because player characters who are constantly looking over their shoulder will eventually grind the story to a halt. Most paranormal investigators are curious about the supernatural, but aren't fully aware of the dangers lurking in the World of Darkness. When they peel back the curtain, they can become so anxious they are no longer compelled to hunt for ghosts. By not introducing enough varied experiences, ghost hunting chronicles also run the risk of becoming stale. The longer a ghost hunter tracks the supernatural, the more desensitized they'll become to yet another bump in the night.

There are two ways to mitigate that risk. The first is to lean on character interactions and give the player characters someone to save. Emotional connections based on love, righteousness, honor, friendship, and family fuel the story because the player characters aren't the only ones at risk of getting hurt. The second way is to treat the player characters' fear as an emotional arc that has moments of calm, tension, and terror. The Storyteller can do this by leveraging environmental details in each scene to make the haunts unique. A haunted house built in the Victorian era will look, feel, and sound different than an abandoned warehouse constructed in the 1950s. A rickety bridge will seem more dangerous than a well-maintained suspension bridge.

Environmental details shape the theme and mood of a chronicle, but also help flesh out the setting in an experiential way. Though the specific details will vary from site to site, Storytellers are encouraged to narrate what's outside a haunted house as well as what's in it. Elements that depict a mood include:

- *Time of day.* Are the investigators visiting a site just before sunset? Or after midnight? The time of day is a clear indication of mood and will help set expectations. Most ghost hunts are performed after midnight in total darkness.





- *Weather and season.* Is it raining? Foggy? Snowing? The weather is an important detail that will help set the mood. Rain, fog, and lighting are narrative tools to evoke a range of emotions including fear, dread, anxiety, grief, remorse, and anger.
- *Maintenance of site.* Is the wood rotted? Metal rusted? Is there mold on the walls? Are the bushes out front well-maintained or in disarray? The orderliness of a site can be used to play around with expectations. Just because a site is old doesn't mean it's haunted — a building could just be decrepit because it needs to be condemned.
- *Condition of neighborhood.* Is this the only house on the block of its kind? Or are there other houses like this one? Don't forget to describe the houses and buildings nestled around the site the ghost hunters have targeted. These locations will help add narrative weight to the story by providing the player characters with context.
- *Attitude of neighbors.* Do the neighbors welcome the investigators with open arms? Or do they shut their windows and ignore them? Balance the reactions according to how the Storyteller characters feel about strangers. Some Storyteller characters may be averse to

talking to anyone who looks “official,” while others might welcome the help to “cleanse” the taint from their neighborhood.

- *Animal behavior.* Do ravens flock to the trees outside the home? Or do they steer clear of the site? Slight shifts in animal behavior can provide clues that all is well (or not well) at any given location.

Narrative details help shape the team's experience and offer clues by fleshing out how a targeted site affects other characters and buildings nearby. These details can give the players a false sense of confidence, or hint that they should spend more time preparing to investigate before heading inside.

Once the ghost hunters enter a site, their environment narrows to what they can see, hear, feel, taste, and touch. Local environments possess physical attributes that can be leveraged at key moments to scare the players or propel them to act.

- *Lighting and electricity.* How is the house lit at night? Does the power work? If candles are present, are they lit? Do they light themselves? The lighting in a haunted location affects visibility as well as mood. Lighting in a facility with multiple rooms doesn't have to be consistent, either. A cellar's electricity could be out



because an antagonist cut the wires. An abandoned sanitarium's medical library could be well lit, because the ghosts are leading the team into a trap.

- *Weather or seasonal effects.* Do the branches scrape against the windows? Is the wind so strong it whistles through the house? Are the pipes in danger of freezing? Snow, rain, and fog that affect the interior of a building are perfect tools to create an ambience and provide the right levels of scare.
- *Temperature.* How cool or warm is it? If the temperature in a room suddenly drops, will the player characters be able to notice that change? Fluctuations in temperature are a key source of data investigators will use to prove the existence of the supernatural. Skeptics and believers alike will take measurements and react to what they're feeling in that moment.
- *Structural integrity.* Are the windows intact or broken? Do the floorboards creak? Any structural element that breaks might affect something else at the site. A shattered windowpane leaves a pile of broken glass a ghost hunter might step on. A creaky floorboard can only withstand so much weight, and the last investigator up the stairs could break it. The physical condition of a site adds a sense of danger that has nothing to do with an antagonist. Should the team panic or run from an enemy, they might even hurt themselves.
- *Scents and smells.* What fragrance do the dead roses in a vase emit? Can the characters smell the stench of musty wallpaper or rotting wood? Is there garbage in the kitchen that reeks? Or decaying animal corpses and body parts? A sense of smell is important to investigators and, in a haunted house, it's often overlooked. By attaching fragrances to clues, the Storyteller can motivate player characters to use multiple senses to unlock the mystery, and they will be more vested in the case as a result.
- *Visible leads.* Is the wallpaper peeling? Are photographs stashed in a false drawer? Is the attic the only room that's locked? Peeling wallpaper reveals drawings or hidden messages that were covered up by the site's new owners. Old photographs reveal what the purported ghost looks like. The locked attic holds the key to unraveling the mystery. Visible clues are the obvious pieces that ghost hunters will look for; they are also a great way to toy with the team's expectations.
- *Odd clues.* One way to introduce red herrings that invite the players into a sub-plot is through physical descriptions that seem out of place. These clues can employ sight, sound, taste, smell or touch. Claw or bite marks in a high school gymnasium. Spilt blood in a library. Out-of-place clues can be further supported by what the team learns before or after they arrive on

site. A recent photograph, mailed letter, or witness' account can complement the haunt and spin off into further mysteries, too.

Following an assessment of the site's details, think about which supernatural creature, if any, is haunting that location. Before you create the antagonist, start with their backstory and determine what historical details attach them to the site. These details serve as clues other characters might find, cover up, lie about, or obscure.

To further shape the team's emotional arc, determine what other emotions you want the players to feel. Do they feel sorry for a ghost who's been unjustly murdered by their former boss? Do they fall in love with a beautiful vampire who's only pretending to be a ghost because it's fun? Do they share a werewolf's anger that climate change is not being addressed fast enough?

By varying the emotional weight of the chronicle, the player characters will be more vested in the story and their interactions with other characters.

## Shaping Team Roles

A team of ghost hunters can comprise two or more curious individuals who are interested in the supernatural. Most often, a team works well when each ghost hunter has a key role to play. This role can be shaped by their area of expertise, their connections to the community, or their core responsibilities during a hunt.

Ghost hunting teams often assign clearly defined roles when they're filming for a reality TV show. These roles range from operating certain pieces of equipment to interviewing witnesses. They can also be determined by a hunter's willingness to investigate a previously unexplored area without backup or help from their teammates.

Storyteller characters are a great tool to leverage. Their roles will complement and conflict with the team's core responsibilities and will encourage player characters to step up and be more confident in a hunt. Suggested professionals for Storyteller characters include attorneys, EMTs, police officers, paranormal investigators, building inspectors, occultists, mediums, historians, archivists, librarians, clerks, and construction workers. Storyteller characters can also be connected to a site or an antagonist, in the form of a bereaved family member, property owner, tax collector, neighbor, witness, victim, rival antagonist, spy, reporter, etc.

Player characters may determine roles before a session begins, but often the needs of a hunt will further shape how a team split their duties. As Storyteller, you'll ensure that no two hunts are exactly alike by leveraging interesting details and new antagonists to retain the group's interest. When planning a session, keep in mind the physical layout of a building will be a factor in the team's decision-making. Filmmakers and equipment operators will need access to electrical



## What Some Mortals Don't Know Will Spook Them

One of the most important questions a Storyteller can ask is whether or not the player characters believe in the supernatural. Ghost hunting chronicles often include investigators who don't know the supernatural is real. Unlike paranormal denizens of the World of Darkness and the creatures who serve them, these mortals remain blissfully unaware there is some truth to myths and legends involving ghosts, vampires, werewolves, etc. A ghost hunter's lack of knowledge, when combined with their curiosity, offers a unique peek into the shadows. Ghost hunters can be skeptics or believers, and their personal experiences inform what they do from night to night. These experiences don't always have an explanation, and a lack of satisfying answers keeps ghost hunters focused on finding "a" truth they're comfortable with until their next hunt begins.

outlets and structurally sound furniture to monitor activity on the site. Medical professionals will need good lighting and a quiet space to perform first aid or offer comfort if needed. Team leads may want a designated meeting spot to regroup, review evidence, and assess plans.

Sometimes, team members' roles will also be shaped by an implied sense of authority. To avoid always putting one player character in the spotlight as the leader, encourage rotating managers based on which Knowledges, Skills, and Talents apply to that night's hunt. Though a skeptical professor with a background in occult knowledge might be perfect to lead an investigation at an old cemetery, that same scholar wouldn't be as effective in a spooky sanitarium haunted by a murdered psychiatrist.

## Conflict

The heart of a World of Darkness chronicle involving a team of ghost hunters is the conflict each paranormal investigator encounters from night to night. The underlying nature of this conflict is informed by the player character's belief in the supernatural, because their conviction shapes why they're motivated to hunt ghosts. Sometimes, conflict will occur between two mortal characters — one believer, one skeptic — who'll argue over how to proceed with an investigation. One character might be convinced the ghost haunting the bed-and-breakfast is fake, while the other is adamant an expensive antique mirror is the wraith's Fetter. This clash of wills becomes more prominent if both characters want something from the investigation. The skeptic might want to sell the house and its Victorian-era valuables to an auction house, provided they can prove the site is not haunted as locals claim. The believer, on the other hand, doesn't care about the money. They care about the danger a ghost poses to the living, and they want to make sure it's dealt with before someone gets hurt.

Other times, three or more characters will enter a conflict. Each is motivated by a tangible or intangible goal, and will argue, lie, convince, sneak, or fight their way to getting

what they want. One character wants to walk away from a haunted museum because they feel the ghosts are too powerful to overcome. They fear for the team's safety and are uncomfortable taking unnecessary risks. The other teammates feel they must try to exorcise the spirits even if they'll fail, because otherwise they won't get paid. Does that lone ghost hunter walk away from the investigation knowing their peers are facing an indomitable force? Or, do their peers try to reach a compromise by enlisting the help of a rival team or waiting for one more night to gather additional resources?

Conflict generates interest because it creates an obstacle the player characters must overcome before proceeding with their investigation. There are two types of conflict present in a chronicle: internal and external. Storytellers are encouraged to introduce both as narrative tools to intensify key moments during a hunt.

## Internal Conflict

Paranormal investigators often struggle to balance their interest in the supernatural against the demands of their daily lives. Some seek out gigs on live streams and reality television shows to justify their interests; if they get paid to hunt ghosts, then that must be a job worth doing — right? Other ghost hunters don't think about money at all, and worry they'll become obsessed with the unknowable or worse: the unsolvable.

Internal conflict typically occurs in one of two ways: when a player character encounters the supernatural and that event doesn't line up with their beliefs, or when a player character is forced to re-examine their role as a ghost hunter once their beliefs are confirmed. Unlike other World of Darkness player characters, paranormal investigators struggle with their role in supernatural society because they often don't realize what's lurking behind the curtain. Some ghost hunters are perfectly content not to know — until they have no choice.

The story of a player character who begins hunting ghosts as a skeptic and reluctantly becomes a believer doesn't necessarily happen in one session. Cultural mores, scientific knowledge, social expectations, religious influences, and en-



trenched superstitions shape a player character's conscious and unconscious attitudes. Forcing skeptical player characters to face the supernatural is not guaranteed to make them turn into believers; doing so will often force characters to do exactly the opposite. Some will become obsessed with finding rational explanations for clear signs of paranormal activity. Others might even quit ghost hunting altogether.

Alternatively, believers also experience a character arc. At the beginning of a chronicle, the player character expects that what they encounter will be supernatural. As their investigations progress and their findings are mixed, however, they become unsure of themselves and must reexamine their beliefs, which will vary widely. Some investigators might be convinced vampires exist, but don't put stock in an afterlife, for example. Others may expect to see a ghost, but have no idea they can be harmed by one. After all, there's a big difference between hoping to meet a ghost and encountering one for the first time.

Internal conflict offers a strong foundation for a player character's vested interest in a chronicle, because it neatly intersects with the other types of conflict they encounter.

## **External Conflict**

Paranormal investigations are rife with personality conflicts, political issues, and dangerous threats. The external conflicts a ghost hunting team is forced to deal with include both the mundane and the supernatural. Characters will need to pick their battles carefully lest they lose sight of their goals.

## **Character versus Teammates**

Ghost hunting teams are filled with skeptics and believers, amateurs and trained professionals, truth-seekers and entertainers. Each player character has their own reasons for wanting to hunt the supernatural, and sometimes those goals conflict even when they're on the same team or working for the same organization. While personalities might clash in the heat of the moment, those conflicts tend to be temporary and will be resolved once danger has passed. Lingering conflicts between teammates will be affected by the team's reason for hunting ghosts and how each player character feels that goal should be achieved.

Arguments over money can be a source of conflict, but a lack of resources isn't enough to incur a rift between player characters unless items with personal value are being stolen or intentionally broken. More often, two ghost hunters will argue about the team's approach to the hunt. A skeptical investigator thinks the rest of the team is taking a minor encounter far more seriously than they need to, and wasting valuable time getting stuck on historical research when they could seek out other opportunities. A fame-hungry ghost hunter knowingly puts the team in great danger — just to get it all on film.

Most conflicts that pop up can be resolved or even interrupted by the well-timed appearance of a malevolent antago-

nist. Teams who are forced to deal with unexpected threats must think quickly and rely on each other to make it through the night. These moments encourage camaraderie and teamwork that positively impact all ghost hunters on the team. Paranormal investigators who have a strong sense of teamwork will worry less about the occasional spat and focus on solving the case. Teams that struggle to find their footing will deal with more interpersonal conflicts until they figure out how to work together.

## **Character versus Rivals**

Paranormal investigators are drawn to "hot spots" or areas of known and consistent supernatural activity. What one team finds compelling may incidentally draw another group of ghost hunters to that same location. When two teams are investigating the same site, they have the option of working together or racing against the clock to expose the area's secrets. Time is a key factor that shapes whether two teams will be friendly rivals or bitter enemies, because it introduces external pressures that place limits on who will solve the case and be the hero that night. The time both teams have on site is affected by the demands of their jobs; the cast of a reality TV show or the clients of an anxious realtor might have a tighter deadline than a rival group, unless they're present for the same reasons.

In addition to timing issues, some groups will clash because they'll view each other as competition. The composition of the teams will impact how the conflict begins, is drawn out, and is resolved. A group of skeptics and a team of believers are guaranteed to spark an argument. Teams with mixed levels of both, however, might weigh their loyalties to their teammates against the needs of the hunt.

Rivalries have the potential to last longer than one night. When a rivalry becomes a recurring battle between two teams, short-term competitive goals morph into long-term needs. What starts out as a friendly race to get evidence of a ghost sighting turns into an ugly battle rife with sabotage and traps. Sneaky rivals might even hurt their competitors when they're not on site by interfering with their ability to get permits, parking, and gear. Others might even go so far as to discredit a team's reputation by implying they faked evidence or footage to con others. Well-connected rivals, on the other hand, will leverage their existing relationships with local law enforcement and community organizers to make their competitors' lives difficult.

## **Character versus Law Enforcement**

Security guards, police officers, and federal agents all have a role to play in a chronicle involving mortal characters. Though supernatural creatures may not care about or be privy to legal matters, a group of paranormal investigators are subject to the law. Conflict might be as simple as risking arrest for trespassing or breaking and entering into a designated build-



ing. Police interference can also occur if another antagonist — a supernatural creature, their allies, or representatives of a rival group — is pulling law enforcement's strings.

Law enforcement offers a source of continuous conflict the player characters must deal with if they want to continue hunting ghosts. Officers have a clear, surface motivation to uphold the law, but may have a secondary goal that's unique to their character. A disgraced detective might want to find proof of the supernatural to get her job back; a local beat cop might also be a vampire's ghoul; a rookie agent is convinced the player characters are up to something illegal.

Using officers to introduce conflict is also a way of reminding the player characters that their curiosity about the supernatural has real-world consequences. It doesn't matter if the ghost hunters obtain undeniable proof that ghosts exist or not. Once they do, they still have to convince the right people before the truth can become known. In the World of Darkness, there are many different forces that work to ensure that never happens.

## Character versus Organizations

A law enforcement agency is one type of organization that ghost hunters might encounter. In addition to legal matters, paranormal investigations might incur trips to the county clerk's office, local libraries and universities, auction houses and secondhand stores, historical archives and museums. In each of these places of business and public service, a larger political body holds sway. The county clerk answers to the mayor's office. The local library is part of a city-wide network. An auction house is run by a group of estate planners.

Municipal or for-profit organizations provide conflict when they prevent the player characters from getting what they need to continue the hunt. Similar to law enforcement, each organizational type has a specific focus that will help or hinder ghost hunters. Typically, organizations hold knowledge or clues the team needs — especially if they hunt ghosts as well (see Chapter Three: Ghost Hunting Organizations). This might include a piece of lore, a historical record, witness testimony, access to medical files, access to a TV studio, or old occult tomes.

Player characters typically don't run afoul of an entire organization, regardless of which type it is, during their first encounter with members from that group. Over the course of their investigations, ghost hunters form relationships with local professionals who form opinions about them and their approach to the hunt. Eventually, strained or hostile encounters can lead to a denial of resources.

When the hunters are outright blocked or attacked by members of an organization before they've given anyone just cause, it's probably because that organization possesses a larger agenda. These goals may be as complex as a race to buy all





haunted locations, or as broad as finding everything there is to know about poltergeists. In any case, player characters that stand up to organizations risk being hurt by them in some way. That harm can be anything from the loss of a job or relationship to kidnapping and murder, depending upon the group.

Organizations that act as formidable forces hold power and resources the player characters do not. In many ways, they are also faceless antagonists the ghost hunters can't beat without help or planning. Groups tend to be more dangerous than individuals, because they might also be influenced by supernatural forces pulling their strings.

Long-term agendas may become the hook for a chronicle or provide a source of recurring antagonists; they also provide a sense of scale for the player characters. The harder an organization's goal is to achieve, the more threatening they often turn out to be.

## Character versus Supernaturals

With the exception of mediums and certain ghost hunting organization members, the average paranormal investigator will not know the extent to which supernatural beings are real, or that they operate in their own societies. The creatures within the World of Darkness will create indirect and direct forms of conflict the ghost hunters must overcome to solve a case, save a victim, or escape from harm. Though most paranormal investigators do not possess the means to outright kill a supernatural creature, they are still considered a threat. Whether the ghost hunters are media hounds or scientifically-minded scholars, they have the power to expose the supernatural to a broader audience.

Unless it's a wraith the team encounters, supernatural creatures will attack a team of ghost hunters indirectly to scare them off further pursuit of a case. A vampire holed up in a derelict house might send a group of ghouls to slice their tires, rough them up, or break into their apartments. A werewolf opts to scare the ghost hunters' friends and family to show how dangerous their line of work truly is. Sometimes, they may also interfere with the investigators' plans by bribing local officials, secretly buying up the network that hosts their reality TV show, or gobbling up real estate.

The response of a supernatural antagonist will largely depend on what the player characters want to achieve during an encounter and whether or not they accurately identify what they've discovered. Some antagonists just want to be left alone, while others will attack any hunter — especially if they're part of a larger organization. Should the player characters know the supernatural is real, it is strongly advised they prep for a fight before they investigate an unknown location.

## Chronicle Structure

In a ghost hunting chronicle, the narrative arc of the story will depend on what the team's purpose and reason for hunting is.

If the team works for a reality TV show, for example, the shape of the game will primarily be episodic. Each session will act as a potential source of footage for the fictional show, and each case will provide material for one to three sessions before they move on to the next mystery.

When a group of paranormal investigators are not hunting ghosts on a deadline, the shape of the story will depend upon the nature of their case and their personal investment in the mystery. Ghost hunters who know the residents of a haunted house will spend more time working with their clients to investigate why they're being tormented, because they have a vested interest in their safety. Clients who hire a group off the internet motivate the team by paying them money; the player characters may not be emotionally attached to the case unless they're tied to the mystery in some fashion.

The heart of a mystery needs to be compelling enough to warrant an investigation, but the hook is just as important. Storytellers should not assume the team will always take a case when the opportunity presents itself. Reasons for opening a case might include:

- *Anonymous Tip:* Anonymous tips are effective tools with which to bring new ghost hunters together and to help spark interest. The same tip might be sent to four different characters, drawing them to a location at a specific time and date. Or, a tip could be mailed to a group with no identifying information. Teams are drawn to investigate because they'll want to know who sent them the tip and whether it warrants a closer look.
- *Cryptic Message:* Encoded messages, riddles, or puzzles are appropriate for teams who need a small win before launching an investigation. Unlike the anonymous tip, the cryptic message doesn't have to be from an unknown sender. To spark interest, the message itself offers a mystery for the team to solve. The solution doesn't have to be straightforward, either, but it does need to be important enough that another character wants to hide it from prying eyes.
- *Death:* Many mysteries begin with the discovery of a dead body. A murder or tragic, unexplained accident are the fastest ways to kick off an investigation involving multiple characters and organizations. This hook can be introduced more than once: first when the body is discovered, and second when the victim's ghost appears. Unsolved murders offer a clear path for the teams to follow; when they solve the case, they help the ghost and the bereaved.
- *Divination:* Tarot cards, runes, sticks, dice, scrying mirrors and other divinatory methods can provide flavorful hints about what'll immediately befall the players if they don't heed the advice of the reading. Divinatory sessions can be performed by a medium



who feels safer hiding behind the cards. Sessions are thematically appropriate for parties, especially around All Hallows' Eve, and in certain locations such as New Orleans.

- *Fame*: Amateur and professional investigators are often drawn to famous cases, because if they're the ones to solve it, they'll reap untold rewards. Famous hauntings are often a mixture of folklore and urban legend; unlike "new" haunts, the teams will have their hands full researching the history of long-term cases. The notoriety of a case also yields rival ghost hunters, tourists, and con artists, too.
- *Historic Anniversaries*: History is filled with tragedy, and where there's violence, there are often ghosts. Anniversaries of historic tragedies are perfect opportunities to hook teams interested in the past. Teams often dig in after finding out about the anniversary, the tragedy, and (with a little digging) the characters involved. This is a good way to introduce the logistics of ghost hunting. A guarded cemetery is much harder to investigate than an empty field of battle.
- *Hurt Contact*: Every ghost hunting team has friends, families, allies, and contacts they want to protect. When someone gets hurt, most investigators will want to help. This hook is often more emotionally compelling when introduced during an existing chronicle, because established relationships are often easier to leverage than brand new connections.
- *Inexplicable Encounter*: Personal encounters with the supernatural are one of the easiest ways to lure a team into an investigation — provided the ghost hunters aren't so scared they quit on the spot. These encounters will vary widely and should be introduced thematically according to which antagonist the team will face.
- *Medium's Advice*: Reluctant mediums offer great advice — even if a team doesn't want to hear it. Some mediums believe it's their job to relay messages from the beyond to a targeted recipient, while others have no choice but to do a pesky ghost's bidding. The personality of the medium is just as important as the message they're offering; if the team doesn't connect with the medium, it's unlikely they'll treat them as a reputable source of information. A medium may also be present at (or performing) a séance for the team, and offer them advice across the table.
- *Mistaken Identity*: The ghost hunters could unwittingly receive a lead that wasn't meant for them to solve. Usually, but not always, some evidence must be included for the team to follow up on. Found evidence could belong to a police detective, rival ghost hunting group, or members of the press who agreed to follow up with the client.

- *Orders*: Ghost hunters who are part of a larger organization, whether that's a television network or a paranormal club, are often beholden to that group's needs. The party might receive orders to investigate a site, and take the job believing investigation is their duty. Orders can also be given to set the team up for a crime they didn't commit, to test the group's efficacy and loyalty, or to distract them from a real mystery.
- *Prophetic Dream/Warning*: Ghost hunters who don't possess the abilities of a medium might receive a warning or vision in their dreams. The details of this dream are then shared between all members of the group, highlighting that something strange is happening to them. Usually, but not always, the dreams include a terrifying antagonist that seeks to harm them.
- *Recurring Encounter*: Urban legends are rife with supernatural encounters that may be repeated if a ritual is performed or a certain site is visited on a particular date each year. Rumors of recurring encounters can be presented as something fun to test; when the encounter takes a darker turn, the team is swept up in an investigation.
- *Reward*: Money, favors, grants, and other forms of compensation are good motivators to ensure a team pursues a mystery. Most ghost hunters need specialized, expensive equipment to continue hunting ghosts; others are more pragmatic and may want gas or hotel money, or extra cash to pay informants. A reward is a strong motivator to take a case regardless of its potential.
- *Strange Object(s)*: On rare occasions, a ghost hunter might accidentally pick up a haunted relic — known to wraiths as a Fetter. The hunter may not *know* that object is haunted, but will report strange phenomena not long afterward. This gives the team an active investigation as they try to figure out how and why their fellow hunter is being haunted.

When plotting an arc, remember that the team's professional talents and experience with the supernatural also matter to the story. Paranormal investigators who are new to the hunt will put more legwork in to establish connections with local organizations, research possible sites, find and maintain their gear, and develop their methodology than an older group. A simple case that might be solved by veterans in one evening could take much longer for a new group, simply because they've never hunted ghosts before.

## Sample Narrative Arcs

The majority of ghost-related plots will be propelled by which (and how many) cases the team solves. Thus, most ghost hunting chronicles will not include a long narrative arc fixated on one investigation, unless the story includes recurring antago-



nists or groups who prevent the team from unraveling that mystery. Longer arcs might involve undermining a rival ghost hunting organization or exorcising ghosts from a specific town or city.

The following is a list of sample narrative arcs that can be used to build several sessions' worth of story. Each arc incorporates a goal the team can work toward.

- *Competition:* A team of amateur reality TV show ghost hunters has been hired to replace a beloved group of veterans. To keep their jobs, they must ensure their first season's ratings will match their predecessors.
- *Redemption:* Two rival ghost hunting teams blame each other for the death of a shared ally. The antagonist responsible instills ever-increasing feelings of guilt, and deepens the rift between rivals. To redeem themselves and get justice for their fallen friend, they'll need to overcome their differences and solve the case.
- *Resolution:* A bereaved family encounters a ghost who tells them their dead sibling was murdered. Seeking answers, the family forms a group of paranormal investigators to uncover the truth.
- *Saving Victims:* A group of experienced ghost hunters receive an increasing number of calls from frightened witnesses. To figure out why, the team must uncover clues to figure out what — or who — is behind the uptick in activity and save the victims before it's too late.
- *Collating Data:* A group of scientists acquire a grant to prove there is a rational explanation for everything. Unfortunately, their experiences are inexplicably terrifying. Using science, the skeptics must reconcile their encounters with their beliefs before someone gets hurt.
- *Atonement:* A discredited group of paranormal investigators are down on their luck and having a hard time finding a case. When they finally get one, it turns out to be more than they can handle. Outmatched, they must try to rebuild relationships to deal with a real threat.

Threats from Storyteller characters can also be used to propel the plot forward, but their effect is temporary. Frightening encounters don't contain enough narrative meat to sustain an entire chronicle, because the story tends to stop when antagonists (or their allies and contacts) are not actively targeting the players.

## Using Ghost Hunters as Antagonists

To use ghost hunters as antagonists effectively, Storytellers are encouraged to gauge how dangerous they are before they're introduced in a chronicle. Use the following as a guide

to assess what role they play in the story. Keep in mind, most teams will treat the supernatural as a case to solve; when first introduced, they'll take an investigative approach to the hunt long before they become combative.

- *Amateurs:* Inexperienced ghost hunters who don't know anything about the supernatural are dangerous not because of the knowledge they have, but rather the knowledge they don't. Amateurs will poke and prod at mysteries until they get spooked and give up, or find closure. These teams don't know enough about the supernatural to hunt its creatures. The more they learn, the more curious they'll become, and the greater the chance they'll unwittingly cross paths with the supernatural. If they're freaked out, the team might call the police, fire a gun, or trigger a panic.
- *Experienced:* Veterans with a few cases under their belt are not spooked as easily as amateurs are. They know how to bribe the right people to find the best cases. They're tech-savvy, great at spotting fake activities, and know when to rely on their instincts. Experienced teams are a bigger threat because they know what they're looking for and what to expect. When something happens during a case that doesn't line up with their beliefs or expectations, the veterans will dig in deeper to find answers. When they can't, an experienced team will seek help from an outside source that has more information and resources than they do.
- *Rival Groups:* One team of ghost hunters may not be enough of a threat, but two competing groups quickly turn into fierce antagonists. Rival teams, regardless of their experience levels, are committed to the hunt because they each have a reason to solve the case. Competition is a strong motivator for ghost hunters, and the urge to "win" can drive motley groups to uncover what's really happening in a specific location. Supernatural characters who are caught between two groups are at risk of being exposed, captured, or worse — especially if the teams set aside their differences and temporarily work together.
- *Organized:* Sometimes, paranormal investigators connect with other teams to form a community or group of like-minded individuals. While each organization is different, the number of people involved, when combined with the knowledge and resources they possess, immediately increases the team's threat level regardless of their experience. Organizations have power, motivations, and reach that a single team usually doesn't. As soon as an outside group is involved, the stakes are higher for everyone involved.
- *Media-Hungry:* Reality TV shows, podcasts, vlogs, live streams and other forms of content are often part of a paranormal investigative team's night-to-night activ-





ities. Some content can produce advertising revenue or a steady stream of donations from patrons. When a team craves the spotlight, they balance the needs of their case against what makes a great, entertaining shot. Reality TV shows can be threatening because teams tend to be aggressive when they are catering to the needs of a demanding network audience. When they can't find what they're looking for, their episode falls flat and they risk losing viewers or their jobs.

- **Hunters:** Given time and motive, a group might become serious hunters who want to attack, capture, or kill whatever they can find. Though some hunters might study what they find, usually that knowledge is used to make them more effective as hunters. When paranormal investigators become hunters, their concerns become tightly focused and they often emerge as sharp, if not paranoid, investigators who avoid the spotlight. Hunters don't suspect they're being watched, they know they are, and take extra precautions to hide their identities and keep a low profile. Hunters are more dangerous because, by the time they commit to hunting the supernatural, they're willing to make sacrifices other teams wouldn't.
- **Mediums:** Paranormal investigators with the ability to talk to ghosts bring new threats to the hunt. Mediums can

be reluctant or might embrace their gifts. Regardless of their personal comfort level, mediums are a threat because their powers are unknown. It's difficult to walk up to a group of mediums and point out which one is more powerful than another. To fully assess what harm a medium might do, their powers would have to be tested or exposed. They can be more dangerous than the average ghost hunter, but what threat they pose varies depending upon the character. The key to undermining a medium is to discredit their abilities; though the medium is certain of their experiences, other characters are more likely to be skeptical of their powers than to believe them.

- **Wraiths:** Ghost hunters can become wraiths in certain circumstances. An investigator must either have compelling, unfinished business or die horribly. Either reason can trigger the formation of a wraith in any chronicle. This narrative tool can work very effectively. If the player characters were threatened by human ghost hunters, wraiths pose a different, and arguable more powerful, threat. Investigators might first appear in a chronicle as human, get themselves killed, and then appear as wraiths later to torment the living or find the answers they couldn't when they were alive.

When incorporating paranormal investigators in a chronicle, tie their character backgrounds to elements in that



game's setting to avoid breaking the mood. As antagonists, ghost hunters are threatening in different ways depending upon which **World of Darkness** game they appear in.

## **Ghost Hunters and the Supernatural**

Ghost hunters who cross paths with other supernatural creatures are the secondary, rather than the primary, focus of the story. Their perspective is not as important as what the player characters want and need. While most paranormal investigators are not fully immersed in the **World of Darkness**, the player characters will be.

Each antagonist holds different beliefs and expectations that affect how they'll react in an encounter. When the player characters are supernatural, their actions will either escalate tension and trigger a combative response, or release it by offering a satisfying explanation.

### **Ghost Hunters versus Wraiths**

Paranormal investigators represent varying threat levels to wraiths. Skeptical ghost hunters who want scientific evidence pursue wraiths, putting pressure on them until they're forced to attack. Reality television shows that set up camp in a wraith's haunt might unwittingly expose their location depending upon what the crew is able to capture on film. Some hunters might suspect that a wraith is tied to a physical object; without knowing what the ghost is connected to or why, they search for Fetters in the hope they'll be able to control or destroy the Restless.

When wraiths become hostile, some hunters will abandon the case, fearing for their lives or wits. Others might change their tactics and seek additional allies. Instead of being satisfied to gather evidence, the hunters might attempt an exorcism or bring a powerful medium who boasts an ability to affect ghosts. Should the hunters become obsessed with finding the ghost, they'll become increasingly fixated on uncovering the secrets of the Underworld.

Ghost hunters can also be used as unwitting pawns to introduce a real threat. The investigators might be followed or monitored by members of the Orpheus Group who are using them to hunt for wraiths. The hunters might also be tailed, or even possessed, by a Spectre as well.

### **Hunters versus Vampires**

Ghost hunters may not be looking for vampires, but they do investigate derelict houses, abandoned warehouses, and forgotten graves. At first, they'll assume vampires are myths and urban legends. Ghosts are far more believable to paranormal investigators, if not to the general public. If a vampire can keep their hunger in check, a team might mistake their powers for a ghost's. If they touch the vampire's flesh, they might even believe a ghost has possessed a corpse.

Paranormal investigators who are more likely to believe in blood magic and vampiric myths are greater threats, because they often want to expose vampire society instead of targeting just one vampire. Should the investigators belong to an occult-based organization, like the Arcanum or the Society of Leopold, their threat level increases. A small team of investigators might not have the means to effectively breach the Masquerade, but a society will have books, contacts, funds and motives that go deeper than a little curiosity.

Vampires are used to dodging suspicious mortals, so for some, ghost hunters might not represent a significant threat at first glance. Over time, as ghost hunters become more persistent, a team might unwittingly cross paths with a ghoul or a vampire hunting easy prey. The more questions a ghost hunter asks, the greater the chance they'll pursue the vampire further. Often, ghost hunters need satisfying answers before they'll move on to the next case; if they can't find them, they'll escalate their tactics until they do.

Mediums represent a larger threat; if their powers don't affect a vampire, they might talk to the vampire's victims or wraithly enemies instead.

For more on vampire hunters see **Hunters Hunted II**.

### **Hunters versus Werewolves**

Though it is unlikely a pack will move into a haunted house, it is possible that werewolves will encounter ghost hunters if they both happen to be investigating the same site or occurrence. Ghost hunters don't know enough about ghosts and spirits to tell the difference between them. Often, their classifications are inspired by what the media depict a ghost to be. Werewolves can use that to their advantage, provided they don't shift in front of the hunters.

Paranormal investigators will jump at the chance to study werewolves. Most occult books don't describe anything deeper than folklore and superstition; for many, the word Garou is a mystery. What werewolves must fear are the investigators attached to larger organizations who are desperate to capture and study them or glean their secrets. Some investigators may treat a werewolf as a victim suffering from a reversible curse, and consider themselves heroes for "helping" that Garou heal.

Investigators are unlikely to ally with werewolves, because everything they've been taught tells them the Garou are the result of either a demon's bite or a terrible virus. In either case, it doesn't matter how the hunters frame their beliefs; they will prove deadly to a werewolf who doesn't take their earnestness and curiosity seriously.

### **Hunters versus Mages**

When a ghost hunter encounters a mage, they'll process the mage's abilities through the lens of their own culture's folklore, along with personal experience. At first, paranormal investigators will identify a gifted mage as a psychic or medi-



um depending upon what abilities they use. If a ghost hunter can't make sense of a mage's powers, they'll rely on myth and legend instead, and call them a witch or warlock.

Paranormal investigators make interesting antagonists because they often make a distinction between science and magic, and will treat a psychic, a medium, and a witch differently. Some hunters will believe in mediums, but not think witches are real. Mediums who can talk to ghosts are more acceptable in a hunter's eyes than a witch who can curse them, and are often encountered more frequently.

Because a ghost hunting team is a mixture of beliefs and backgrounds, some groups will concentrate on ghosts while others will broaden their net to study the occult or analyze any paranormal phenomena with the scientific equipment at their disposal. Teams are often adept at hiding cameras, capturing footage, and analyzing data. Should they "prove" a mage's powers are real, the mage is exposed. When their abilities are known, the mage is at risk of being hunted by a more powerful threat.

## Hunters versus Changelings

Changelings will treat ghost hunters differently depending on who they're hunting with, and whether their investigations are serious. If a medium is in their midst, however, changelings are likely to believe they're one of the Autumn People — a clear enemy that must be dealt with. When that's

the case, it doesn't matter if the team they're working with have powers or not, they all become a threat.

When a medium isn't involved, a changeling's reaction will be mixed — despite the fact that ghost hunters risk exposing them to the public. Some changelings will tolerate reality TV ghost hunters because they're amused by them, and may even play with their perceptions to provide a "serious" encounter with a "ghost." Experienced paranormal investigators, on the other hand, are more of a threat, especially when backed by a larger organization.

Ghost hunters have easy access to a ton of folklore, most of which presents the fae as magical beings who can grant boons, mutter curses, and alter reality for a lucky few. Some investigators would go to great lengths to capture a changeling just to test a theory found in a dusty book, and many changelings posit that if someone believes in ghosts, well, the fae are a close second. Other hunters might assume they have fairy gold, wands, tiaras, and such things only found in myths, and will hunt them for their treasures. A few bereaved investigators might even pursue them because they mistakenly believe a fairy was responsible for the death of their loved ones.

Changelings might not take the threat of a ghost hunting team seriously, because they themselves aren't what the investigators are after. Ghost hunters don't know that, however, and it's their naivete and lack of supernatural awareness that make them a threat.



# Appendix: Ghosts and the Undead

In the World of Darkness, when a mortal dies a restless ghost may be created. Spirits that haunt and terrorize victims are bound to the living; ghosts often have unfinished business and are inextricably linked to possessions, people, and locations from their former lives. Regardless of what mortals believe, the ghosts they encounter are, in game terms, wraiths.

In **World of Darkness: Ghost Hunters**, ghosts may appear in a chronicle as antagonists, or may be used as a narrative device. Antagonists may be built using rules found in any 20th Anniversary core rulebook such as **Wraith: The Oblivion** or **Vampire: The Masquerade**. When a core rulebook is not available, antagonists may use the guidelines presented in this Appendix.

## Powers and Weaknesses

- Wraiths “feed” on emotion to recharge their Willpower, just as a Cainite might feed on a mortal’s vitae. Willpower is used to power a wraith’s magical abilities.
- Wraiths manifest most effectively in “haunted” sites and places where great suffering or trauma has left a psychic residue (battlefields, torture chambers, “suicide bridges,” etc.). In such places, the Shroud between the worlds of the living and the dead is weak.
- Possession in **World of Darkness: Ghost Hunters** is used as a narrative device to deepen the impact of the story. Some Numina (p. 105) can be used to resist an attempt to possess a character. Once a character is pos-

sessed, Numina or the proper understanding of the rites of exorcism may be used to expel the ghost.

- Wraiths are normally invisible unless they choose to be seen. Certain necromantic and mediumistic abilities grant the power to sense unseen ghosts.
- Some necromancers and mediums have encountered ghosts of true malice and hatred, who set about making their would-be masters’ lives an absolute misery. These dark spirits seem to “live” only for inflicting pain, and indeed seem to thrive on it. Other ghosts seem to fear them, and refer to them as Spectres.

## Sample Wraiths

### Recently Deceased

Newly-created ghosts don’t always realize they’re dead, and retain significant ties to the mortal world. They hold no secrets about the supernatural and are often surprised by what they don’t know. Some wraiths revel in their new state, and torture the living; others mourn the trappings of their former life and are desperate to find closure.

**Attributes:** Strength 0, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Academics 2, Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Computer 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Investigation 1, Law 2, Melee 1, Occult 2, Politics 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

**Willpower:** 5



## Spectre

A Spectre is a wraith who's given in to the darkness deep in their heart. Rage, bitterness, and hatred drive the ghost to act, unleashing a whirlwind of twisted emotions to attack the living. Spectres act differently than other wraiths; they appear to communicate with each other telepathically. If one is in trouble, up to three more Spectres will appear by their side.

**Attributes:** Strength 0, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1; Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Intimidation 3, Melee 3, Occult 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

**Willpower:** 8

## Old Soul

Wraiths who are considered "old" may have been dead for years or centuries. Over time, their connections to the mortal world have frayed, and their humanity has eroded. Older wraiths are more powerful than the recently deceased, and are some of the strongest and most feared ghosts.

**Attributes:** Strength 0, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1; Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Academics 2, Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 5, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 4, Computer 3, Empathy 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 1, Law 2, Melee 2, Occult 2, Politics 1, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

**Willpower:** 9

## Powers

### Unseen Hand

A ghost does not possess a physical body and cannot lift or throw objects. This power allows them to interact with the physical world using the power of their mind. Dot ratings reflect the weight they can lift, move, or otherwise animate once per turn. To use this power, roll Wits + Awareness, expending 1 point of Willpower per attempt. Successes equal the number of turns the wraith can affect an object.

#### Unseen Hand Levels

- One pound/one-half kilogram
- 20 pounds/10 kilograms
- 200 pounds/100 kilograms
- 500 pounds/250 kilograms
- 1,000 pounds/500 kilograms

## Malevolence

Angry ghosts possess the raw power of their emotions and use that to affect the living. A Spectre with Malevolence can plague a victim and force them to experience varying degrees of bad luck and catastrophic accidents. Roll Manipulation + Intimidation as a contested roll against the target's Willpower rating. While this power doesn't necessitate a Willpower expenditure, if the wraith chooses to spend a point of Willpower they may add a die to their pool, for a maximum of three dice. The duration and threat level is variable.

- A victim suffers minor inconveniences such as tripping on a crack to stub their toe or saying the wrong thing at the right time. Mechanically, the Storyteller reflects this mishap by adding a +1 difficulty to dice pools relevant to the situation. A stubbed toe might increase Athletics difficulties by 1, whereas awkward social interactions might increase Etiquette difficulties by 1.
- The afflicted's bad luck is no longer merely annoying, and their injuries are sustained. They dump water all over their laptop or step on a rusty nail. The difficulty increases to +2 for the duration of the effect.
- The victim's misfortune takes a turn for the worse. They might get into a car accident, lose their job, or contract Legionnaires' disease. The difficulty increases to +3 for the duration of the effect.
- The victim now suffers from major catastrophes and chronic illnesses. The difficulty increases to +3 for the duration of the effect. In addition, the victim subtracts one die from associated dice pools during appropriate moments in the story.
- The afflicted's misfortune reaches epic proportions. For the duration of the wraith's ire, the victim cannot do anything right. The simplest movement can break bones and shatter glass. The difficulty increases to +4 for the duration of the effect, and the victim subtracts two dice from any relevant pools.

The duration of the wraith's malevolence is determined by the number of successes achieved during the contested roll.

One success	The victim's next action
Two successes	One scene
Three successes	One day
Four successes	One week
Five+ successes	One month



## Creep

Ghosts scare the living by manipulating shadows and sounds in the places they haunt. Varying levels of this power give ghosts the ability to frighten and terrorize victims. To inflict this power, spend a point of Willpower and roll Wits + Occult. Each success increases the duration and area of the effect up to a maximum of 5 turns and a 5-foot radius around the ghost.

The Storyteller may, at their discretion, have the victim roll Wits + Survival against the ghost's Willpower rating. If they fail, the character loses a turn out of sheer fright.

- Shadows lengthen, stairs creak, and the air chills. The victim's difficulty rating on their next action increases by 1.
- Shadows move, lights flicker, and the air is noticeably cool. The victim's difficulty rating on their next action increases by 2.
- Darkness snuffs out any visible lights, the walls shake, and the victim can see their own breath. The victim's difficulty rating on their next action increases by 3.

••• As above. In addition, the ghost can audibly shriek and produce minor illusions like bleeding walls or beetles crawling on the ground. If the ghost has possessed a victim, it can make their skin appear to rot. The victim's difficulty rating on their next action increases by 3, and the victim removes one die from their pool.

•••• As above. The ghost can produce a major illusion, like the front of a haunted house screaming in terror, a room changing size and shape, or rivers of blood. If the ghost has possessed a victim, it can unnaturally "turn" their head around and levitate their body. The victim's difficulty rating on their next action increases by 3, and the victim removes two dice from their pool.

# Successes	Duration	Radius of Effect
One success	One turn	One foot
Two successes	Two turns	Two feet
Three successes	Three turns	Three feet
Four successes	Four turns	Four feet
Five+ successes	Five turns	Five feet



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 John M. Osborne  
 John Morel  
 John Rachwal  
 John Veltman  
 Jonathan D. Harter  
 Jonathan Lang



Jordan Springer	Matthew V	Peter Steponaitis
Joris	Matthias Dohmen	Petri Wessman
Josh Wolf	Max Polun	Phil Hattie
JPitkänen	Mehrkat	Phil McGregor
Julien Hermitte	Melissa Krause	Philipp Neurohr
Kaelorrigg	Mette Arenkiel	Phillip Bailey
Kari A. Clark	Michaï S.	Pierre-Luc Benoit
Karl Erik L. Hoftaniska, aka Guillo-	Michael "MMOaddicted" Molik	PS "Ghostcore" Goering
tine-Chan	Michael Bolitho	Queen Bitch & Deathblade
Katy H.	Michael Bowman	Quinn Bird
Kelly Jones	Michael Compton	R vd Heever
Ken Kimbrough	Michael D. Smith	R. Taylor
Ken Trench	Michael James Kelly	Rafe Richards
Kevin Combs	Michael Kanaris	Rav
Kevin Daignault	Michael Kently	Raven Lunatic
Killian Grey	Michael Pichon	Rebecca Murphy
Kintran Valgrige	Michael, Holly, James, & Kathryn	"Reseru" Sansone
Kyle Lewis	Gunn	Rev. Phillip Malerich
Lark Cunningham	Morgan Gilbert	RG Cummings
Laurel Mannion	N. Friis	Richard Augustino
Leandro Cardoso	Netigy	Richard Badger
Lee Donovan	Nicholas A Tan	Richard "Bat" Brewster
Lee Sims	Nickolis Strafford	Richard Pleyer
Lensman	Nicola Went	Rob Crewe
Leslie Weath	Niemand	Rob Stewart
Lewis Davies	Nikephorus Vlach	Robert "Jefepato" Dall
Lord Eden Flaks	Nils Stadje	Robert Fraser
Lucas L.	Ninjar	Robert G. Male
Łukasz Korzeń	No es el Máster, son los Dados	Robert Wyatt
M.E	Nuno Theodoro	Rod Meek
Mórrigan	OisÃn McColgan	Ross Gates
Maleck	Oliver Hambsch	Roy MacInnis
Manfredi Mangano	Oliver Korpilla	Rubén E. Ballester
Marc Collins	Oomizuao	Runeavin Sylvanwulf
Marc Oliver Schneeberger	Oracle	Ryan Elliott
Marc-André Perreault	Panu "Possessed" Laukkanen	Ryan L. Van Every
Marco Generoso	Paolo Spaziosi	Ryan McClung
Mark Solino	Patrick Flood	Ryan McWilliams
Marko "Lykas" Stein	Patrick Sandoval	Ryo Ogawa
Martin Blake	Paul C. Easton	S. P. Locke
Martin J. Hoag	Paul E. Smart	Sam Myatt
Martin Kreutz	Paul Hayes	Sami Uusitalo
Mar'vell Essex	Paul V Smith	Samuel Mitson
Matt Gray	Pavel Jagen	Sapper Joe
Matteo Tirelli	Perverseness	Sarah Williams
Matthew Earlywine	Peter Krulder	Scott Andrews
Matthew Glass	Peter Malmo Lange	Scott K. Ernest
Matthew Jones	peter peretti	Scott Rick



Sean Callaway  
 Seana McGuinness  
 Sebastian Freeman  
 Shafi Ziauddin  
 Shana L. Horn  
 Shane "Asharon" Sylvia  
 Sheev Palpacringe  
 Sheila Z  
 Sid Sebastian Tanner  
 Simon "Something Spooky" Jones  
 Simon Brake  
 Simon York  
 Sinan Eczacibasi  
 Sir Claudio  
 Stalin\_McRally  
 Stephanie Mullendore  
 Stephen Esdale  
 Stephen Young  
 Steve Hudson  
 Steven Byrd

Stuart D.  
 Sygfried Krehi  
 Syn  
 Tanya Hindmarsh  
 TechnocratJT  
 Ted Ludemann  
 Terrell  
 Thad Green  
 The Carpenters  
 The Disreputable Mog  
 THE Donnie  
 The Masseys  
 The Outlander  
 The Primogen  
 The Walkers  
 Theodora Naqvi  
 Thomas George Huber  
 Thomas Haakinen  
 Thomas Vye  
 Tiffany Korta

Tinker Tales Studios SG  
 Toby Weingarten  
 Tom Doncom  
 Tony Horne  
 Tremira  
 Tsargoth  
 Tyler Middleton  
 Tyler Stewart  
 Vitaly Fedoseev  
 Waldviech  
 Wayne Alexander Hodgins  
 Willy de la "Agencia"  
 Windthin  
 XS  
 Xylemicarious  
 Zedwimer  
 ZePurgatorius  
 Zhivko Yakimov

## WISTERIA PROPHETS

(un)reason  
 \*\*\*NIKOLAI STEEN\*\*\*  
 \*Thtrnerd221  
 Aaron Foster  
 Aaron Morgan  
 Adam Karpolorich  
 Adam Rivas  
 Adam Whitcomb  
 Adrian R.  
 Agent Kylie Levesque  
 agzaiM werdnA  
 AJ Etzweiler  
 Al The Ghost Screamer  
 Alan Elliman  
 Alan Orr  
 Alberto F.  
 Aldo "Kwako" Montoya Reynaga  
 Alex  
 Alex Bell  
 Alex Billman  
 Alex Gagnon  
 Alex Loney  
 Alex Requis  
 Alexander Crain  
 Alexander Joyce

Alexander Lucard  
 Alexis Naucek  
 Alexis, Jeremy, & Lorelei  
 Alisha Walton  
 Alonso O. Rubio  
 AlQuick The Amazing  
 Amara Ahmed  
 Amy & Jason Berteotti  
 Anders Holmström  
 Anders Silverplats of the Boston  
 Night Watch Society  
 André Roy  
 Andrei Antonio Gonzalez Reyes  
 Andrew Becerra  
 Andrew Comb  
 Andrew Cummings, Episkopos of  
 the Diogenes Club  
 Andrew J. Bush  
 Andrew Sandlin  
 Andrew Shell  
 Andrew Waterfall  
 Andy Lewis  
 Andy Zeiner  
 Angela and Davis Edwards  
 Angelborn

Anja Kraus  
 Anthony C.  
 Anthony Ingrao  
 Anthony Van  
 Aria Arundottir  
 Arnold S Triplett  
 Arthur "Torakhan" Dreese  
 Arzie  
 Ashley Chlebanowski  
 Astrid Dean  
 Austin Barth  
 B. Ackerley  
 B.T.Tomlinson  
 Bael the Cruel  
 BangoSkank, Malkavian by em-  
 brace, Hecata by delusion.  
 Belial Langley  
 Bellhound  
 Benjamin Lyons  
 Bentley W. Chism  
 Benton M  
 Bill Walsh  
 Billy Littlepage  
 Blake Deakins  
 Bob de Lange



Brad D. Kane  
 Brandon "Grizz" Riley  
 Bre & Andy  
 Brendan McCann  
 Brennan Willingham  
 Brian A. Coats  
 Brian D.  
 Brian D. Nazaryk  
 Brian McMurrer  
 Brian Rivers  
 Brightfires  
 Bryan "Maldroth" Botz  
 Bryce Perry  
 Bryce Undy  
 C Jessup  
 C.P. Hoffman  
 C.T. Phipps  
 Carlos Ovalle  
 Casey Johnson  
 Cass and Trev Bryce  
 Cathi Gertz  
 cdoor  
 Celeste  
 Chad Griffith  
 Charles S Childress  
 Charlie "PookaKnight" Cantrell  
 Chester Robere Morris, SPR  
 Cheyenne Applebee  
 Chimera  
 Chris Aronen  
 Chris Burnside  
 Chris Matthews  
 Chris Mawford  
 chris settlemoir  
 Chris Stevenson  
 Christopher Bertell  
 Christopher Brereton  
 Christopher Carey  
 Christopher Marlow III  
 Christopher Martin Coulter  
 Christopher Morrell  
 Christopher P. Crossley  
 Christopher R. Wain  
 Christopher Sturges  
 Chrys Seward  
 Coleman Crew  
 Connor DeFalco  
 Crüjen A. Geist

Craig Page  
 Crispen Gray  
 CybearG  
 Cyn  
 D. Davies  
 Dan "The B" Johnson  
 Dan "Credorion" Griffith  
 Daniel "Willow-Briar" Philpin  
 Daniel Atson  
 Daniel Deschenes  
 Daniel Lundsby  
 Daniel Peterson  
 Daniel Poulin  
 Daniel Strode  
 Daniel Yaeger  
 Daniel, Trista, and Eleanor Robi-  
 chaud  
 Daniela L.  
 Dante Giovanni di Negro  
 Darksheer  
 Darryl Johnson  
 Dave Cutts  
 Dave Linehan  
 David Alexander Parker  
 David Alyn Brown  
 David Bjorne  
 David Bresson  
 David Connell Olsher  
 David Doucey  
 David Jones  
 David Karoski  
 David Lee Terhune  
 David Thomas  
 David Viars  
 David X Hinojosa  
 David Yvan Ross  
 Davis Phelps Jr  
 Dean Petty III  
 Deke Reisig  
 Dennis Appell  
 Diablerist  
 Dmitri Vance  
 Doctor Alfons Von Grawitz Ph.D.  
 Donte  
 Doug Atkinson  
 Douglas Bramlett  
 Dr. Bang  
 Dr. D. Chiaravalle Jr.

Dr. Walter Shaw  
 Drew Littell  
 Duane "Bishop" Kessler  
 Ed Moretti  
 Edouard Contesse  
 Edwin Wessels  
 Enknot.com/rpg  
 Eric Rainey  
 Erik D Smith  
 Erik R. Austad  
 Erik Welehodsky  
 Ernie Sawyer  
 Ethan & Samantha M.  
 Eugen Goutnick  
 Fabian A. Lopez (Korzhy iz Adban)  
 Fabio Almeida  
 Fergus Jack-Hinton  
 Forrest Lee Spilker  
 François Desouches  
 Francis Renault  
 Francisco "Stytch" Martinez  
 Frank McCormick  
 Frank Tenace  
 Fraser Imrie  
 Gabriel B. P. Costa  
 Gabriel Sorrel  
 Garrett J Moynihan III  
 Gary Smith  
 Geir Maurtvedt  
 Geoffrey Rabe  
 Geramy C. Forshee  
 GH Trace Webster III  
 Ghost of Phaolan  
 GhostFacer Mike Staton  
 Gianluca Guazzo  
 GK Coleman  
 Gordon G. Gordon  
 Graham Davey  
 Greta Reinhardt  
 Griffin Horn  
 Grimm & Jade Revenant  
 Grzegorz Zawadka  
 Guy Bayes  
 Hans W. Uhlig  
 Hazel Trevenbran  
 Henrik Augustsson  
 Henrik Falk  
 He-Zin Kwon



Holger Schrenk  
 Honore Ivoire "CruciatuS"  
 Hunter "Chef" Molsbee  
 Hunter Sykes  
 Hunters Entertainment  
 Ian A. A. Watson  
 Ian E. Muller  
 Incandescent Dragon Creations  
 InFurNo Gaming  
 Ingrid Emilsson  
 Isaac M. Hicks  
 Ivo de Mooij  
 J De Santo  
 J. Dillard, E.P. and Creator of From  
 Beyond  
 J. Yarton  
 J.N.N.Bieber  
 Jackson Miller  
 Jacob Kile  
 Jairain  
 James Andrew Brown  
 James Bell  
 James Lloyd  
 James Rei  
 James Rodrigues  
 James Surano  
 Jared Kueterman  
 Jason C Marshall  
 Jason Erb  
 Jason Freston  
 Jason Gauthier  
 Jason Italiano  
 Jason Place  
 Jason Robinson  
 Jason Ross Incza  
 Jason T. Alexander  
 Jaye Sunburn  
 Jayson "the 14thguest" Turner  
 Jed Baker  
 Jeff Erwin  
 Jeff Hoff  
 Jeffrey Pittman  
 Jennifer R. Griffin  
 Jens "Spacejens" Rydholm  
 Jeremy A. Mowery  
 Jeremy Brown  
 Jeremy S Miller  
 Jerry Doolin

Jess Haines  
 Jessica Gains  
 Jim Brashears  
 Jim McShane  
 Joan Anonical Sartori  
 Jody Bowman  
 Joe Marino — Geekdomo  
 Joel W. Dowling  
 Johan Staaf  
 John  
 John "Zanziber" Rogers  
 John A. David  
 John Armstrong  
 John Bravos  
 John D  
 John Lambert  
 John M. Portley  
 John Murmello  
 Jonathan Adams  
 Jonathan D. Head  
 Jonci Aguillard  
 Jonesy  
 Jordan "Milly" Millward  
 Jordane Thiboust  
 Jorden Varjassy  
 Josef Radl  
 Joseph A Rosario  
 Joseph Sampo  
 Josh Heath  
 Josh Sjothun  
 jostling  
 JPD  
 Julian "Jules" Burns  
 Justin "Magnus Vanskelig" Mitchell  
 Justin & Jennifer Smith-Pulsipher  
 Justin Mohareb  
 Kai Schiefer  
 Karen Kris Katie  
 Karl Berger & Barbara Dahl  
 Karl Hagen Mann  
 Kat and Aaron Baucum  
 Katie S.  
 Keith E. Hartman  
 Kevin "Schimmelryder" Warmer-  
 dam  
 Kevin Hislop  
 Kimberly Godwin  
 Kraftormel

Kraig Blackwelder  
 Kris Baxter  
 Kristopher Childress  
 Kyle Henderson  
 Kyle Litke  
 Kyle Regan  
 Kyle Ricks  
 L. Determan  
 Lachlan Dry  
 Lance Hosaka  
 Lars Holgaard  
 Laura Edyvigis Rojas Torres  
 Lee Moneta-Koehler  
 Leonard Holding  
 Library of Alexander  
 Lifestealer  
 Lori Krell  
 Lorne Gauthier  
 Lucas van Toren  
 Luke camille  
 Luke N. Davison  
 M Pearson Moon  
 M. Kumpf  
 M. Pittman  
 M. Shannon  
 MacKenzie Amadeus Coker  
 Magus  
 Majdi Badri  
 Maleesha Thompson  
 Mandavar the Seeker  
 Marcello Larcher  
 Marco A. Palou and Pablo J. Diaz  
 Marcos Almeida Leite Bomfim  
 Marcus and Leslie Arena  
 Marcus Zonis  
 Mario Breton  
 Mark Thompson  
 Marfi Garza  
 Mathew Marolt  
 Matt "Archon of salt" Palmer  
 Matt Caldwell  
 Matt Carman  
 Matt Gregor  
 Matt Herrboldt  
 Matt Street  
 Matthew Hedge  
 Matthew Plank  
 Matthew R. Cunningham



Matthew Roberts  
 Matthew Sanderson  
 Matthew Sharp  
 Matthew Wasiak  
 Maxim Parisée  
 Meggie Hewitt  
 Michael "Benezri" Brosens  
 Michael B. Snapp  
 Michael Bergh Hansen  
 Michael James Cullen  
 Michael Kiesling  
 Michael O. Holland  
 Michael V. Roberts  
 Michel Strack-Zimmermann  
 Michele Marie Arko  
 Michelle C. Light  
 Michelle Mamer  
 Mike "Hollywood" Tomasek Jr.  
 Mike and Brian Goubeaux  
 Mike Blackett  
 Mike Montgomery  
 Mikkell Olander Lund  
 Miranda Lonsdale  
 Mishmoo  
 Mr Micheal  
 Mr. Samhain  
 N. McCoy  
 Naasaw Nayts  
 Natalie Ortiz  
 Nathan "Ox Bellows" Bjerke  
 Nev Kelly  
 Niall Shea  
 Nic Matuzic  
 Nicholas Muelhenweg  
 Nick Nigro  
 Nicolas Villatte  
 Nik May  
 Nikhil D. Majumdar  
 Nikika Giovanni  
 Nikolaus Poenisch  
 Nina Blain  
 No One of Consequence  
 Noah G Hirka  
 Noble Thayer, Clan Tremere  
 Old Man Miller  
 Olivier Jobin  
 Ols Jonas Petter Olsson  
 P. McGeachie

Parudj  
 Patrick Carrick  
 Patrick Cossel  
 Patrick Eli Dunn  
 Patrick Gill  
 Patrick Hutc  
 Patrick VanDusen  
 Paul "Anorak" Record  
 Paul "Vesta" Williams  
 Paul and Brittany Burns  
 Paul Gilbert  
 Paul Huey Hubbard  
 Paul Leone  
 Paul Stefko  
 Percival Belmont  
 Peter De Kinder  
 Peter Engebos  
 Peter Nielsen  
 Phil Broughton  
 Phil Ranalli III  
 Phil Scopa  
 Philip W Rogers Jr  
 Phillip Soldo, Paranormal Affairs  
 Division  
 Phobos  
 Pieta Delaney  
 PlagueWind  
 Poe Emily Wyman  
 Preston L. Bobo, Ph.D.  
 Professor Powergamer  
 Pshe  
 R. Books  
 R. Derek Pattison  
 R. Neary  
 Raeann Gonzalez  
 Rain & Aidenn  
 Randall Crawford  
 Ray Jenkins  
 Ray Wodanson  
 Reno W Sauck  
 Ricardo "Sardonis" Penteado  
 Richard "EllwynX" Ayars  
 Richard Chilton  
 Richard Palmer  
 Richard R. Stack II  
 Rick LaRue  
 Risa Wolf  
 Rob Amaranth

Robert Biskin  
 Robert Hausch  
 Robert Jason "Mason" Branham  
 Robert N. Emerson  
 Roberto Hoyle  
 Rodger L. Gamblin  
 Rodger S Graham Jr  
 Ronald H. Miller  
 Rotem Guttman  
 Russ Boxley  
 Ryan "Galby" Galbraith  
 Ryan Curtis  
 Ryan D Miller  
 Ryan Faricelli  
 Ryan Winter Cahill  
 S  
 S. Alexander Gentry, PhD  
 S. Gaston  
 S. Silva-Miramon  
 S.T. Marie  
 Sabrina Horsley  
 Saleem Halabi  
 Salvador y Patricio Montes  
 Sam Hing  
 Sam Yoon  
 Sam Young  
 Samantha M.  
 Samedarkclouds  
 Samira Melz  
 Sammy Bravo (EpicPartyGuy)  
 Sara Robinson  
 Scott "Lyshote" Banks  
 Scott Drebus  
 Scott Kelly  
 Sean Gallagher  
 Sean Smith  
 Selena Knight  
 Sergey Zinoviev  
 Shadowstep6  
 Shan "Landback" Morris  
 Shane Freund  
 Shane Larfield  
 Shane Rose  
 Shannen Kolb  
 Shannon Badgley  
 Shaun D. Burton  
 Shawn Glass  
 Shawn Johnson



Shawn P  
 Shawn P.  
 Simon "The Vampire" Blackbourne  
 Sioux City Fool  
 Sligsixty  
 Sofia Fernandez Rodriguez  
 Soulibon  
 Stéphane "Je ne suis pas goth"  
 Zuckerman  
 Stacy Przybysz-Lawrence  
 Stalks-the-Reef  
 Stefano Monachesi  
 Stephen Post  
 Stephen Reuille  
 Stephen Shulusky  
 Steve A. Hester  
 Steve Cranford  
 Steve L  
 Steve S  
 Steve Wolfy Scott  
 Steven Alban  
 Steven Fujisaka  
 Stoney  
 Sylvain "OgGy" Tanguy  
 Sylvain Pronovost  
 szarkel  
 T. Moore  
 T.R. Fullhart  
 Tano Brusciannelli

Tanya Santoni  
 Teletha Salemi  
 Terry Zimmerman  
 The Death that Comes in the Night  
 The Silent Squid  
 Theodore M Barnett  
 Thomas Maund  
 Thomas Nuckolls  
 Timothy & Mitzi Gousie  
 Timothy Mushel  
 todd estabrook  
 Tommy Svensson  
 Tony Adkins  
 Tony JD Sterago (super scary fan)  
 Tracy Cook  
 Travis Alvarez  
 Travis Hartland  
 Troy Lenze  
 Turner M.  
 Tyler "Stonewall" Gurgens  
 Tyler J Cvetan  
 V. Kärkkäinen  
 Vasileios Tsiakalos  
 Vegard Kivle  
 Verossa, Keeper of Lost Memes  
 Verri  
 Victoria Jaczko  
 Vincent Shadowlight

Vistani Radanavic  
 Vladimir "Maria Scopelli/Lady Walker" Tierney  
 Von Cotton  
 waelcyrge  
 Walter B. Schirmacher  
 Walter Soto  
 Warren P Nelson  
 Wayne seeger  
 WebTangler (really not a Monitor)  
 Wesley Dodds  
 Wesley James  
 Wilhelm von Karolinas, the younger  
 William Martin  
 William Rosensteel  
 WOLVERTRON  
 WRAITH KILLER TEMPUS  
 Xavier Aubuchon-Mendoza  
 Yodo  
 Yuna Ulc  
 YYamazaki  
 Z. A. Hammond  
 Zach Going  
 Zachary Thomas Tyler, syncretic  
 Ashukhi shaman  
 Zack Norwig  
 Zia Ravencross

## ASHUKHI CORPORATION

A Bunch of Gamers  
 A. Busey  
 Adrian Mailahn  
 Alec McClain  
 Allen Gin  
 Andreas E. Cross  
 Andrew Brown  
 Andrew Gibson  
 Andrew Laliberte  
 Andy "Andreas Rayne" Dodd  
 Anthony Blea  
 Azouth  
 B. F. F. Hansen  
 B. Hill  
 Balevala  
 Bastion, Digital Echo

Bedrock City Comic Company  
 Ben Dinsmore  
 Best Team Best  
 Bob Jacobs  
 Bob Stauffer  
 Brad Whitcomb  
 Brandon Hodges  
 Brandon Lee "Chewey" Moore  
 Brian Bartholomew  
 Brian Johnson  
 Byran Weaver  
 C. Beau Sampson  
 Chad Hazel-Kepler  
 Charles Siegel  
 Charles Trécourt  
 Chris A. Barney

Chris Herrick  
 Christian J. Müller  
 Christopher Bishop  
 Christopher M. Pinder  
 Colin Wallace  
 Craig Micklewright  
 D. W. Shull  
 D.M. Hubbard  
 Damian Storm  
 Daniel Ley  
 DarlingRose  
 David Futterer  
 Doc Eternal  
 Don Kiesling II  
 Donnie "Lord Aludian" Roos, Jr.  
 Dustin Turner aka SaintWiccan



E.P. Madonna  
Elijah Dixon  
Eric Brann, Alex Villagran  
Eric C. Steiner  
Erika Paulus  
Ewan Cowhig Croft  
Felix Shafir  
Frédéri "Volk Kommissar Friedrich"  
POCHARD  
Frederik "De Fre" Symons  
Götz Weinreich  
GC Fournier  
Glen R. Taylor  
Guido Gerritzen  
Ian Hamilton  
ipsi  
Ishcar  
J&H Santo  
J. Alan Lawson  
J. R. Foster  
J. W. Bennett  
J.House  
J.W. Walker  
Jacob L. Rice  
James W.  
Jamie Vann  
Jason Bostw  
Jasper Decru  
Jeff Haw  
Jennifer Fuß  
Jeremy Estlick  
Jeremy Korth  
Jeremy Miller  
Jericho Rodriguez  
Jim E. Lewellen  
Joe Burgos  
John Vikør Green  
Joseph Baloke  
Joseph Luczek  
Julián Navarro  
Julien Declercq  
Justin Sawai

Justin Webb  
Kai "Shadow Lurker"  
Karsten Freeman  
Katya Boestad  
Kazair Lux  
Kerry Birmingham  
Kevin Jensen  
Kevin P. Harris  
Kris "Chance" Bulterey  
Lau Alcober  
LeAnn "Ellyham" LaFollette  
Lee Morrissey  
Loren Eason  
Lorenzo "Nadraxes" Asselman  
Louis Trécourt  
Lyttleton L. Callender  
Mark  
Mark Braasch  
Marlen Abu-Ghazaleh  
Martin V Ottesen  
Matthew Lynn  
Matthew Reames  
Matthew Webb  
Maureen MacFionn  
Merlino Frezza  
Methandrela  
Michael Laii  
Michael McMorro  
Molly Summerfield  
Mr. Anybody  
N Milfull  
Nicholas Chan  
Nicholas D Dragisic  
Nick Romano  
Nixelleborus Mahaema  
Noble Knight Games  
Parker Sorrels  
Paul Courtenay  
Pedro(Te)  
Peter "Malkira" Lennox  
Peter Merkel

Prince Emmanuel Maxi  
Profesor Cascabel  
Professor Álar Valverde  
Remy "Drizeal" Cottance  
Rev. Dr. Troy Reeder  
Richard Libera  
Robert Sanzone  
Robin "Freebeard" McNair  
Rose G.  
Ross Hunt  
Ross-Lovelace Foundation  
Ruby Mae Meadows  
S.A. Wolf  
Sara Rivman  
Scott "Nothri" Woodward  
Scott Antman  
Scott E. Vigil  
Scott Riley  
Shanna Broussard  
Shawn Riley-rau, Robert Preston  
Simon Michael Hastings Keith  
Spirit of Chantelouve  
Stephen Joseph Ellis  
Steven Collins  
Takahara Tanaka  
Ted Pertzborn  
Terry Robinson  
Tharathip Opaskornkul  
Thomas  
Thomas Martin  
Tim Remington, David Remington  
Trevor Lee  
Trollune  
Ty Storie  
W.J.Schebler  
Wes Foster  
Wolf of Meguro  
Wout Geerings  
Xiu Tong  
Yves "Morkeoth" Chabirand  
Zachery Naldrett



# WORLD OF DARKNESS GHOST HUNTERS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Player: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chronicle: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Demeanor: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Concept: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sex: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

## Attributes

### Physical

Strength \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
 Dexterity \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
 Stamina \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○

### Social

Charisma \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
 Manipulation \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
 Appearance \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○

### Mental

Perception \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
 Intelligence \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
 Wits \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○

## Abilities

### Talent

Alertness \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Athletics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Awareness \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Brawl \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Empathy \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Expression \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Intimidation \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Leadership \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Perception \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Streetwise \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Subterfuge \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### Skills

Animal Ken \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Crafts \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Drive \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Etiquette \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Firearms \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Larceny \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Meditation \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Melee \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Performance \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Stealth \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Survival \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### Knowledge

Academics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Computer \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Enigmas \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Finance \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Investigation \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Law \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Medicine \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Occult \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Politics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Technology \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## Advantages

### Numina & Other Traits

\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
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### Backgrounds

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### Merits & Flaws

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### Humanity

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### Willpower

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### Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

### Health

Bruised \_\_\_\_\_ □  
 Hurt -1 \_\_\_\_\_ □  
 Injured -1 \_\_\_\_\_ □  
 Wounded -2 \_\_\_\_\_ □  
 Mauled -2 \_\_\_\_\_ □  
 Crippled -5 \_\_\_\_\_ □  
 Incapacitated \_\_\_\_\_ □

### Experience

\_\_\_\_\_

### Virtues

Conscience \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Self-Control \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
 Courage \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○



# WORLD OF DARKNESS GHOST HUNTERS

*The abandoned lover, waiting for her paramour to return, only to die, alone. Now she waits in her house forever.*

*The murdered family, killed in a spree so violent their spirits couldn't pass on to the hereafter, now wreaking an untampered revenge on anyone they find.*

*The serial killer, who never made his tally complete in life, now determined to possess the bodies of the living to continue his gruesome campaign.*

*These ghosts, and more, haunt our world. They watch us, they torment us, they play with us, they find themselves locked in Sisyphean cycles, where the only respite comes through the haunting of the living.*

*It is our role to hunt these spirits down. Some believe we're laying them to a deserved rest. Others hunt for the renown and to put down the homicidal dead. Others believe they're doing God's work, or with every hunt, their knowledge of the paranormal world increases.*

*We are ghost hunters, and regardless of our motives, it is our task to ensure the dead may no longer torture the living.*

## **Ghost Hunters includes:**

- A broad, deep history of ghost hunter cells, and catalogue of weapons and artifacts ghost hunters might use in the World of Darkness.
- Playable options among the hunters that fight with bullets and blades, and those who fight with belief and supernatural power. Alongside them, those hunters who would track, cage, and study the dead.
- A wide array of story hooks and rich storytelling advice for those who wish to run a game of **Ghost Hunters** set alongside any of the World of Darkness games.
- An appendix containing a selection of antagonists your ghost hunters may come to face.

